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THE CHRISTIAN CERTAINTIES

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THE

CHRISTIAN CERTAINTIES

Discourses and Addresses in Exposition and Defence of the Christian Faith

BY

JOHN CLIFFORD

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"For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the Yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us"—Paul

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PREFACE.

This book is not a systematic treatise. It consists merely of Sermons and Addresses delivered on far-parted occasions, on some of the certainties of the Christian Religion, in the hope of assisting men and women to obtain "a full assurance of understanding" concerning the primary facts and controlling ideas of the revelation given by Jesus Christ.

One feature belonging to the materials and methods here presented may be noted: they have been tested by actual use on the part of those who have made "the living light their lord," and

> "Clothed in celestial steel now walk serene,
> Masters, not slaves."

Robert Raikes described his work in the Sunday School as "botanizing" in human nature. Employing the language of science, I may say I have, in a long ministry, conducted a large number of "experiments," carefully noted their conditions and watched the results, and therefore I speak with the confidence that

comes of the knowledge, that I am uttering truth that has been tested in the heated fires of thought, and sifted again and again in the manifold experiences of men.

Cherishing the hope that these papers may be of service to those who are seeking to assure themselves of God, His character, purposes, and revelation, I send them forth in this fresh form.

JOHN CLIFFORD.

June 1, 1893.

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THE CRAVING FOR CERTAINTY AND THE TEACHING OF JESUS.

"My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself."—JOHN vii. 16, 17.

THE craving for certainty in religion is one of the most outstanding "notes" of our time. We rebel against the teaching which acquiesces in the fate expressed in the words "We have faith; we cannot know," and are only satisfied when we not merely know, but are sure that we know the thing as it is; the fact in itself, and the whole fact in its contour and its contents. Aristotle says, "All men possess by nature a craving for knowledge;" but although we have acquired unexpected and surprising measures of knowledge, we are goaded by an irrepressible restlessness to make every inch of ground under our feet immovably secure. Science has entered life through every door, and broken up our peace in any conclusion that is not error-proof, and in any rules of life that have not borne the strain of all possible experience. The draughty houses of delusion, in which we have long dwelt, are pulled down, and most of us are hurrying to lodge ourselves in the soundly-built edifices of truth, if only we can find them.

> "Mighty confidence!
> One pulse of time makes the base hollow—sends
> The towering certainty we build so high,
> Toppling in fragments meaningless."*

* Don Silva in George Eliot's "Spanish Gypsy."

Still we cherish the steadfast mind and undivided will that builds again. A passionate desire for reasoned and reasonable conclusions compels us to eliminate every source of illusion. Our telescopes are achromatic. Our scales weigh to a hair. Our scissors shear off the accretions of traditions and show the bare fact. Nothing can be "hushed up." The fierce light of reality beats everywhere. And even when the work of investigation has been carried through with remorseless severity, we begin again, vary the conditions, repeat the experiments, and so get rid, if we may, of the last chance of error. Thus we not only attempt to reach the veritable "word of the Lord," but also try to make ourselves more and more sure of its truth, and then, taking heed to it as to a lamp that shines in a dark place, we travel on to the dawning of the day when we shall see God face to face, and be ourselves real in a world of realities.

In itself, this pathetic passion for certainty in religion is no new thing: what is new is the intensity with which the craving burns and the wider areas over which it spreads. As it never glowed so brightly, so never were more urged by its heat. It seems as though Lessing is right when he declares, "The worth of man lies not in the truth which he possesses, but in the honest endeavour which he puts forth to secure that truth," and that men care more for the exciting search than for the possession and use of the pure truth. But it is not so. Men gaze on the long and weary ages of error, and they cannot be content to accept what purports to be knowledge without investigation. They listen for the authentic voice of God. "O that I knew where I might find Him. That I might come

even to His seat." Wherever there is life there is inquiry. Everything shapes itself as a question. Nothing escapes. God, Duty, and Immortality are the irremovable rocks on which the whole superstructure of religion rests; but men feel and speak as if gazing on a "seeming void" and ask, Are there any rocks beneath? Is there a God? Is duty a reality? Is eternity more than a wish, a dream, a vain, egoistic fancy? If God is; how can we be sure of His character, aims, will and disposition toward us? What is His attitude toward sin? Does He pardon it? If so, how? May we be sure of forgiveness, and that He and we are at peace? Has He spoken to us? Have we His actual words in our Testaments, Old and New? Is the whole content of the Testaments His "word"? If so, in what sense? Does God speak now? What is His part in the troubled, perplexed, mysterious, and awful life of to-day? Who will tell us and, telling us, make us sure that he tells us the fact as it is?

I do not forget that there are men who do not put these questions; men suffering from intellectual impatience, incurable levity, or weakening cowardice, who refuse to think out their religious problems, and halt midway in voluntary ignorance and agnostic despair. They do not see the goal and so they languidly assert it does not exist. They say, "You can be sure of nothing. The difficulties are so grave. The sources of confusion and illusion are so exhaustless that to search for certainty is like chasing a rainbow." Such an attitude is as unmanly as it is irrational. It is a ban on progress. It robs life of that which makes it rich, strong, austere, and lofty. It is akin to the folly

that lays an interdict on inquiry. It is the weakness that says, "I cannot know all; therefore, I can know nothing." It is a slovenly suspicion that we can neither deny nor affirm on the questions of God and Duty, and it makes us deaf when we should be alert to hear, dumb when we should speak, and dead when we should be alive. Doubts become the stones of a prison instead of starting-points on the road to conviction. Laxity and timidity destroy us. Living is reduced to a series of "guesses at truth" and defeats in conflict; when by the courageous grip of fact and truth we might have found the certainties that make responsibility a privilege, faith an inspiration, character solid, service a reward, and the spiritual the real.

But for all who are in earnest in their search for certainty as to the things of God, duty and eternity, it ought to be a genuine joy to discover that the most arresting feature of the teaching of Jesus is its absolute positiveness, its total freedom from the slightest hint of hesitancy or quiver of misgiving. He speaks that which He knows. He affirms. There is no suspensive "perhaps." "Verily, verily, I say to you," is the uniform preface to His communications. Guesses are wholly excluded. His sayings are final, conclusive, victorious. They make an end. Enquirers never have to wait while He arranges the terms of the answer, or come again on the morrow for the response He cannot give to-day. There it is, as complete as it is apt, and as immediate as it is direct. He testifies that which He has seen with such a ring of authority and energy of moral impact, that men admit His superiority if they do not accept His commands, and confess His greatness if they do not follow His leadings.

We have the positive *in excelsis* in the teaching of Christ.

Is it of God He speaks? You have the clearness, simplicity, and strength of One who has heard the Father's voice, seen the Father's works, and knows the Father's mind; in a word "of the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father." Do men debate the conditions of acceptable worship? He settles the whole controversy in a sentence; for He knows the Father as the Spirit, and knows, too, where and how He may be worshipped. Is it a question concerning the spiritual order, the "heavenly things"? He does not produce the free fancies of His mind, but He bears witness concerning what He Himself immediately perceives, since He came from within that spiritual realm where He, as a Son, dwells with His Father, and testifies out of that full and clear knowledge. Is it of the future you ask? The same deep calm is in His speech, the same unanxious conviction. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Is it of the soul's pardon you wish to be assured? Anything more electric cannot be conceived than His heart-searching words, "Thy sins which are many are forgiven. Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Do we wish for guidance in the conflict of duties? Not a moment's pause before the divine edict is lifted up before us. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." Are we perplexed about our social, civic, and national obligations? The Judge of the nations tells of the remediless doom of the peoples that neglect their poor, refuse to heal their

sick, and to visit and reform their imprisoned: and forecasts the joy of those who see Himself in all the needy, and hear His pathetic appeal in their cry.*

All through His teaching, and on all themes and on all occasions, from the first glimpse of his boyhood to the last words from the cross, this note of certitude rings out strong, bell-like, decisive, authoritative, compelling attention where it does not carry conviction, and inspiring awe and hope where it does not urge to faith and discipleship. In Him is "the everlasting Yea."

Now, this brings us face to face with the critical question, In what way did Jesus attain to this serene certainty on these high themes of God and Human Life? Not more irresistibly impressive was His "authority" than the evidence was convincing that He had travelled by the most unconventional methods to this summit of the teacher's power. Dazed by His sublime knowledge and amazing assurance, his contemporaries asked in unbridled surprise, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Of the ordinary learning He was as innocent as, according to the accepted standards, He was not even pious. He did not graduate in the Rabbinical schools. He owed nothing to Shammai, nor had Hillel made Him a debtor. The "culture" of His time had no share in His mental drill and moral education, and yet everybody, excepting priests blinded by privilege, and scribes clad from head to foot in prejudice, could see that He knew the meaning of the "letters" or litera-

* John i. 18; iii. 11; vi. 46; xiv. 1—3. Matthew vi. 34; x. 2; xxv. 14—46. Luke vii. 50.

ture of the Hebrews better than all the scribes, and was in closer touch with God than all the masters in Israel.

It is a common mistake to imagine that there is only one road to certainty in religion, and that the one accepted and established by the self-elected religious authorities of the hour. Hence when Christ challenged the Rabbinism of Jerusalem, set at nought its conclusions, exposed and rebuked its shallowness, insincerity, and hypocrisy, and placed His own luminous and self-attesting statements in opposition to its petty criticism and irritating trifling, the bewildered people, whilst admitting that His words had a spiritual momentum unknown to their scribes, yet confessed that they did not know how He had obtained it. Rabbinism claimed to be the royal road to the kingdom of religion. It held the keys of that kingdom at its girdle, and opened and shut the gates at its pleasure; and yet the New Teacher not only entered in defiance of their will, but He ruled in that realm with a sway far surpassing theirs. Criticism of the materials and data of religion, of sacred books and temple rites, may settle much, but it cannot settle everything. As physical science is master in the laboratory of the chemist, so criticism is supreme in the realm of texts: but Christ shows us that for the "things of the Spirit" there is another method of verification, a method that begins in the set of the will towards right, a supreme choice of, and fixed resolve to do, the Father's will; a method that works onward with increasing evidential power, in heroic obedience to the Father's will in a spirit of filial love, and of patient use of all that makes that will better understood, and then gradually passes into "a peace,

deep as the unfathomed sea," as it registers itself in the solid gains of personal character, and the accumulated fruits of a redemptive ministry to men. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

Thus Jesus carries us to the secret of His own unquivering certitude. He lays bare its germ in His consciousness of sonship to God. God is to Him essentially the Father. The divine Fatherhood is not only the substance of His teaching: but it is the life of His life, the distinctive content of His consciousness, the mould in which all His thought is cast, the fount of His convictions, and the basis of His strong and unwavering assurance of their truth. In the words of the boy of twelve we see the unfolding of that germ. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" The sentence is a window opening into that youthful soul, and permitting us to watch its dawning experiences, first cherished purposes, and ideals. It proves that, young as He was, He had already made His choice in life; He had willed at an earlier date, and still willed, to do His Father's will, to know His Father's mind, and to concern Himself with His Father's "things." To start well in morals is one of the finest auguries for manhood. It pledges the future. Early victories over self are prophecies and preparations of greater advances and of final triumph. The conquests of the lad in Nazareth were no doubt followed by years of bitter conflict and fierce fight with the enemy; but He is sustained by communion with His Father, and the clear vision of truth. Wholly surrendered in will, He makes full use of the

older revelations; grows by the aid of the "word of the Lord" heard anew morning by morning; finds in the Old Testament, that which justifies His mission, vindicates His claims, supplies His plan, and lights up the mystery of His cross; and, in daily converse with the Father, that which feeds His courage, sustains His ardour, and fills Him with peace: and therefore when He begins His ministry it is as an invincible victor: undeterred by threats, uncaptured by flatteries, unbrokenly loyal to His Father's will; loyal unto death, even the death of the cross. The assurance of His teaching is only the unshaken convictions of His life made vocal. He *is* the Truth, and, knowing Himself more and more in His advancing experience, His certainty becomes stronger and stronger. (1) It begins in the vivid and joyous consciousness of sonship to God; (2) its earliest unfolding is a decisive and supreme choice of the Father's will as the rule of duty; and (3) it attains its perfect development in life-long obedience to that will.

Now, Christ's method of attaining certainty in religion is also ours, for His life exhibits the norm of Christian experience. Carlyle says, "I tell you, the ignoble intellect cannot think the *truth*, even within its own limits, and when it seriously tries." If the power to perceive truth is thus dependent on the moral qualities of the man, the methods of "making the truth true to ourselves" are obviously more so. Certainty in religion is intrinsically ethical in its conditions, degree and influence. It belongs to and is incorporate with character and character-building. But character has its roots, first, in the real relation of the soul to God; next, in the right recognition of these relations; further

in the supreme choices of life consequent thereupon; and finally, in unswerving fidelity to that choice.

Hence it comes to pass that the majority of Christians, who attain to a working and joy-giving certainty, are innocent of any philosophy of life or religion, know little or nothing of "dogma" in its exact or institutional sense, and can give no other reason for the faith that is in them than the experience they have of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. They do not seek an intellectual scheme of things, and could do nothing with it if they had one: but they know Him whom they have believed; and He bears all, explains all, and contains all they need. Dr. Dale speaks of a clergyman who was in the streets watching the funeral procession of Mrs. Booth, conversing with a member of the Salvation Army. "What do you know about Christ?" asked the clergyman; "do you know where He was born?" "No, sir, I really don't." "Do you know where He died?" "I can't tell, sir; but *I know that He has saved me.*" Dryden in his *Religio Laici* describes these believers when he says:—

> "The unlettered Christian, who believes in gross,
> Plods on to heaven, and ne'er is at a loss."

Like the blind man challenged concerning his interpretation of the character of his healer, they are ready to say, "Whether He be this or that, according to the creeds of the schools, one thing I know, and this is the thing I care about supremely, whereas I was blind, now I see." Living in the full blaze of spiritual light, they know no misgiving, and care not a jot for all the clamour of the warring theologians. Criticism can do many things; but it cannot hurt them. "Their hearts

are fixed, trusting in the Lord." God's speech has come to them with all the authority of a direct message, and His redeeming activity has so penetrated the sphere of their thought and feeling, deed and character, that they dwell in the actual presence of their Father, and are as sure of Him, and of themselves through Him, as they are of the shining of the sun.

Now, the bottom fact in these experiences, phrase it as we may, is a consciousness of sonship to God, an approximation in germ to that capital and central element in the mind of Christ, which is the light of all His teaching and the unique glory of His revelation, viz., the vivid and joyous experience of the Fatherhood of God. I say, "phrase it as we may;" for the fact is susceptible of numberless representations, according to the positions from which we study it. It is a revelation given to Peter by the Father concerning Jesus, which, on appeal, finds voice in the confession, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." It is the indwelling presence of Christ in the early Christian martyrs and confessors, missionaries and prophets, producing a new race of positive, well-convinced, and undoubting men, ready to go to the ends of the earth in preaching and teaching their beliefs, or to burn in Nero's gardens rather than doubt or deny them. It is the direct vision of God creating a body of seers who, repeating the experiences of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Elijah and Amos, walk as seeing Him who is invisible, and commune with their Saviour as an actual companion and friend, and thus in centuries of ecclesiastical imposture and clerical vice and tyranny witness to the presence and power of the living and Redeeming God. It is the "witness of the Spirit"

as defined in the Westminster Confession:* "This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God." Baxter gives a fuller setting to the same truth when he says: "Our present actual and habitual faith and renovation of our souls, and the sacred inclinations and actions therein contained, are a standing evidence within us. . . . . For none but the sacred Redeemer of the world, approved by the Father, and working by His Spirit, could do such works as are done on the souls of all that are truly sanctified."† You have the same witness in Wesley. "I felt," he says, "my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." Dr. Frank, of Erlangen, one of the chief expositors of Christian certainty, represents the beginnings and ground of the soul's certitude as contained in the experience of "regeneration," the discovery of the "new I."‡ The poet sings with infectious energy the same truth as he narrates the birth of certainty in the soul of Paul:—

> "So even I, athirst for His inspiring,
> I who have talked with Him, forget again.
> Yes, many days, with sobs and with desiring,
> Offer to God a patience and a pain;

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* c. xviii. sect. 2. † Works, vol. xx. p. 136.

‡ "System of the Christian Certainty," by Dr. F. H. R. Frank (T. & T. Clark).

"Then, through the mid complaint of my confession,
Then, through the pang and passion of my prayer,
Leaps with a start the shock of his possession,
Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.

"Surely I catch the words of His revealing;
Hardly I hear Him, dimly understand;
Only the Power that is within me pealing
Lives on my lips and beckons to my hand.

"Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound nor doubt Him, nor deny;
Yea, with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I!

"Rather the earth shall doubt when her retrieving
Pours in the rain and rushes from the sod,
Rather than He for whom the great conceiving
Stirs in his soul to quicken into God.

"Ay, tho' thou then shouldst strike him from his glory,
Blind and tormented, maddened and alone;
Even on the cross would he maintain his story;
Yes, and in hell would whisper, 'I have known.'" *

But howsoever expressed, in poetry or prose, in the terms of theology or in those of everyday life, there is nothing deeper, and no mode of statement more in keeping with the teaching of Jesus than that which finds the germ of religious certainty, in the revelation to the soul of its actual sonship to the Father and its reverent, filial, and joyous recognition of the sublime significance of that exalted relationship.

But it is a mutilated doctrine of certainty which does not advance to the full surrender of the whole soul in loving, patient, and victorious obedience to the will of the Father.

Assurance grows by experience. The effort to obey, in the face of opposition, temptation and difficulty, tests and strengthens and purifies the soul's convictions;

* "St. Paul," F. W. H. Myers, pp. 44, 45.

the believer realises his true self with increasing clearness and fulness.* Victory over sinful desire adds to the evidence of truth. The heart aids the head. The love of Christ constrains the perplexed disciple to hold fast when reason staggers and argument fails. "The righteous holds on his way, and he who has clean hands becomes stronger and stronger" in his conviction of the truth of the Gospel, in his consecration to the service of men, in the purity and loftiness of his motives, and in the thoroughness of his obedience to the laws of Christ. Growth of character is the manufacture of convincing evidence before our eyes and in our hearts; and not more justly does a scientific expert resent the interference of non-scientific men with his methods of inquiry or the value of his results, than the practised Christian objects to give up his convictions because a non-Christian man quarrels with the truths he holds for certain, and the methods by which he has made them true to himself.

Thus for the majority of Christians, as Coleridge maintains, certainty in religion "is in the experience derived from a practical conformity to the conditions of the Gospel—it is the opening eye; the dawning light; the terrors and the promises of spiritual growth; the blessedness of loving God as God; the nascent sense of sin hated as sin, and of the incapability of attaining to either without Christ. It is the sorrow that still rises up from beneath, and the consolation that meets it from above; the bosom treacheries of the principal in the warfare and the exceeding faithfulness and long-suffering of the uninterested ally—in a word, it is the actual *trial* of the faith in Christ, with its

* Romans v. 1—11; sp. 3—5.

accompaniments and results, that must form the arched roof, and the faith itself is the completing keystone. In order to an efficient belief in Christianity a man must have been a Christian, and this is the seeming *argumentum in circulo*, incident to all spiritual truths, to every subject not presentable under the forms of time and space, as long as we attempt to master by the reflex acts of the understanding what we can only *know* by the act of *becoming*. *Do the will of My Father, and ye shall know whether I am of God.*" *

Whilst, then, not abolishing or depreciating other roads to certainty in religion, it is notorious that this is the path travelled by large numbers of the Christian host. Here is *the* reason for the faith that is in us. We have others, and we can produce them when and where they are wanted. Jesus is as historic as Cromwell. Christianity is as real as the Roman law, and the evidences of its influences are more cogent and widespread. The story of human life constitutes a revelation of redemption made to mankind through the prophets of the earlier ages, through the people of Israel, and then, crowningly, in and through Jesus Christ. But we return to experience as the scientific man to his experiments, and we are as safe. Jesus is our contemporary. He is in the soul, and He brings His revelation day by day to the crucial test of life.

Christianity is thus essentially democratic, catholic, universal. Its appeal is to men as men; not as scholars, philosophers, critics, but as veritable sons of

* "Biographia Literaria." The whole subject is dealt with in an extremely able and comprehensive manner in "The Evidence of Christian Experience," by Lewis French Stearns, late Professor of Christian Theology. Nisbet & Co.

the Father.* It speaks straight to the hunger for God; to the soul bruised and wounded by sin; to man haunted with the woes of wasted years, yearning for forgiveness and peace, harmony and righteousness, and pathetically crippled and maimed in his powers and functions. Moreover, it is always spiritual and ethical. It addresses the highest in us, and goads and attracts to the highest beyond us. Exacting beyond all religions in its demands for holiness, instant and full obedience to duty, it is pitiful and tender as a mother towards the unfortunate, the miserable, and the lost. No call is so distinct as for fruit, service, good deeds; and no tone so emphatic as that with which it speaks on conduct. Thus the means of verification are as universal as the message of redemption, and of all assured believers none can surpass the sons of God, who make the Father's will their daily law of life, and bend their whole strength with pure delight to adorn His teaching in all things.

Historical Christianity is susceptible of verification by a well-furnished mind and carefully-drilled intellect, but trained intellects are few. Spiritual and experimental Christianity verifies itself in the hearts of those who accept it, and writes out its divine warrants in the growing character and pure lives it creates; and these products, whilst enriched and expanded by culture, are independent of it, and may attain a marvellous strength and simplicity without it. Scholarship holds the keys of assurance as to the

* Cf. Fairbairn, "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 390. "Before a child can be the adopted son of any man, he must be the real son of some man; and so, if it was only by adoption that God became our Father and we His sons, then we could never in any true sense be His sons, nor He in any true sense our Father."

manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments, still only the few can handle them. But the Gospel is light, and its effect is as when sunshine comes into a dark place. The light needs no demonstration. It is witness enough to all that are in the house. Rabbinism scrupulously preserves the letter of Scripture and punctiliously carries out the rubric of worship; but to many the letter killeth, and worship is only a form, whilst penitence towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, bring the solid satisfactions of pardon and renewal according to the divine ideal of holiness in Christ. Creeds, when throbbingly alive and expressing the active convictions of believing souls, confirm the faith of the individual Christian, but they soon cease to witness to the contents of the general consciousness of the universal Church, and become mere historical labels of the movements of bygone times; and so each disciple must stand for himself on the ultimate rock of a personal knowledge of the Saviour. Criticism is an instrument of vast capacity for service. It kills error, deposes tradition, abolishes the "false exegesis of the spoiled children of the pulpit," disinters long-hidden truths, and places them within sight of the open-minded Church; but after all God reveals the things of the Spirit by the Spirit, and gives to us "the full assurance," that is, an undimmed confidence "of the understanding" in all truths belonging to the "mystery of God" which is in Christ. No criterion of certitude takes higher rank, or has wider use, than that of an inward and personal experience of the redeeming and renewing energies of the Father.

Still, we must not forget that the use of this method

of verifying our religious knowledge has important limitations. First, it is individual, and needs to be buttressed by the witness of the common consciousness of the Christian community. The Christian does not stand alone; he is a member of a brotherhood, breathing a common life, sharing a common relationship to God and to each other, governed by the same motives, guided by the same teaching, and working for the same results; and so his personal experience is confirmed by the general experience of the pilgrim host, who march ever forward, through storm and sunshine, living a life that leads melodious days. If he doubt the witness of his own life, he is reassured as he discovers that it is backed by the testimony of an innumerable company of the spirits of just men made perfect. If, in a moment of blurred vision, he should question whether he is really gazing on the Sun of Righteousness, he finds consoling answer in the words of Paul and John, of Clement and Tertullian, of Aristides and Augustine, of St. Bernard and St. Francis, of Owen and Howe, of Wesley and Whitefield, and the armies they have led in the name of the Lord. Making the life of the Christian community, past and present, his other self, his convictions acquire a strength nothing can vanquish, and the many waters of doubt and trouble cannot quench.*

It is also a great advantage to be able to correct and expand our own ideas and beliefs from the "capitalized experience" of the "holy Catholic Church throughout the world," and in all the ages. The specialists of experience are in danger of limiting the revelation of God by their own narrow and contracted life, and

* Cf. pp. 96, 97.

ruling out any manifestation of the exhaustless fulness of Christ that does not rise upon the restricted horizon of their own life. They must complement the experiences of the unit by a wider imaginative grasp, through hymn and liturgy, biography and history, of the vast variety of Christian conditions, the manysidedness of the Gospel of Christ, the numberless routes along which souls start for the Cross of the Redeemer. We must take security against the dangers of specialism by fostering a close study of, and intense sympathy with, the whole Christian and human lot, that we may command a vision

> "Through all the mighty commonwealth of things,
> Up from the creeping plant to sovereign man;"

and then we must make assurance doubly sure by going back to Jesus; not only that we may give to our convictions a stringent and tonic quality, but also that we may check, qualify, and expand the changing and progressive verdicts of the individual and general consciousness by perpetual reference to the New Testament records of Christ. He is "the Author and Finisher of our faith," its Captain and Leader; its princely example and sovereign type; "the first-born amongst many brothers"; in short, *the first Christian*, and we can only escape the confusions and limitations incident to our humanity by bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and fashioning the movements of our spirit after His. "For how many soever be the promises of God," through the prophets of Hebraism and the philosophers of Greece, "in Him is the Yea;" in Him, who is *God* incarnate, is the complete, all-sufficing response to all souls. "Wherefore also through Him is the Amen,"

our only full Amen "unto the glory of God." So God's great affirmations, made in His Son Jesus Christ, live in us, and through us find that fresh and strong evangelizing expression that will feed the high tradition of the world, and leave our certainties in our children's breasts.

This broadening of our view will prevent us from expecting the witness of the heart to free us from the use of the brain, and from basing inferences on the glow of our piety which are only to be credited to the consistency and coherence of our reasoning. We shall not think that access to and devout use of the *sources* of knowledge is the same as the careful and scientific use of criteria in testing the truths we thus derive. The Gospels, History, Life, Man, the Church, God Himself in His fulness, beset us behind and before, and lay their hands upon us and invite us to study, meditation, and prayer; but obtaining knowledge is not the same as obtaining certitude, though the acquisition of information may be one of the paths to that goal. The assurance that sin is forgiven is no vindication of the theory that Solomon's Song is a dramatic setting of the relations of Christ and the Church, or that the concluding words of Mark's Gospel are or are not an actual if very early interpolation. Intense devotion and passionate zeal for God and His truth are often associated with intellectual impatience, false witnessing concerning Revelation, crude and shallow dogmatism, loud self-assertion and unconscious tyranny. The instruments for verifying truth are appropriate to the truth to be verified. The pure in heart see God. The man with the best eye and the best telescope and the best

astronomical training sees the distant star. The patient student of records, manuscripts, medals, inscriptions ought to be the best judge of the past. No doubt, as an acute critic said, "Matthew Arnold would have understood St. Paul better if he had had a little more respect for him"; but Hatch and Harnack find out the facts concerning the origin and early years of Christianity in the same way as Carlyle discovers the facts of the Commonwealth, or Hunter traces the story of India, or Mrs. Lewis recovers and reveals the Gospel of Peter. The history of the Gospels is to be settled by the men who have the training, the mastery of the apparatus, the leisure and energy for the task. Sound reasoning and accurate expression are aids to the seekers after Christ. Plato is a schoolmaster to lead Augustine to the Saviour. Aristides, the Athenian philosopher, is led to Christianity by the contemplation of the order and beauty of the universe. Loose and muddled thinking on theological themes does immeasurable mischief. Christianity is real, and the real is the reasonable and may be reasoned. A doctrine is self-condemned if it eludes the intelligence. Confusion and obscurity are not inseparable from religion; and He is Christ's messenger who lifts the clouds from the face of truth, and permits her veiled beauty to be seen and felt. The far-reaching saying of Bishop Butler is worthy of memory, "Things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be: why should we desire to be deceived?" Why, indeed! Why do we not accept our limitations frankly; confess "the void" where we are sure of it, admit the shifting sand when we see it, and stand on the rock where we have it. There is rock

enough: and it is rock, and to it we may ever return, though we do not shrink from sailing on the seas of thought, to lend a hand to those who have lost their moorings, broken their anchor, and forgotten their chart. Or if we are afraid to plunge into the sea of life because a little spray has been splashed into our eyes by the storm, we need not condemn those fearless mariners who dare the storm to save their brothers.

Most important of all is it that we should bar out the confusions and misuses of our experiences begotten by vanity, self-seeking, and low ideals. "He who speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory, but he that seeketh the glory of Him that sent him, *the same is true*, and no unrighteousness is in Him"; true in himself, true in his speech, and right in his life. Spirituality belongs to the realm of motive; not to the sphere the man fills, political, scientific, or ecclesiastical; not to the particular form of the work at which he toils, financial, educational, or religious; but to his motive. Aims are the true test of character, and their absolute freedom from the slightest taint is indispensable to reading aright the book of life, and uttering distinctly, and with the contagious force of conviction, the message of God to men. Doubt any assurance concerning perpetual religion that does not bottom itself on the divine mercy, and rise up into beauty and service by the strength of holy character.

CAN WE BE SURE OF GOD?

"Ye worship that which ye know not; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews."—JOHN iv. 22.

CAN we men, in this day and land, be as sure of God, the Father and Saviour of men, as Jesus Christ was when He spake these words by Jacob's well to the woman of Samaria?

Calmly and clearly He speaks of God; of God, the Father in Heaven, to whom men may pray as being His children on the earth; of the God of salvation, in whom they may trust as being sorely in need of His effective help; of God the Spirit, whose viewless but real presence deepens all true penitence, fosters all holy yearning, and realizes all pure and unselfish hope.

"We worship that which we know." His tone is that of intense and unfaltering conviction, undisturbed, calm, whole-hearted assurance. No illusions deceive Him. No doubts check the flow of His clear stream of speech. No fears build barriers to His perfect interchange of thought and fellowship. No hesitations paralyze and shrivel His obedience. "We know." It is not a guess, a wish, a dream, a desire. "We know." He sees and is sure. He is as positive about God as we are of the pavement on which we walk, the sun we see in the heavens, the presence of one another in this

building. He knows Him; not as an empty name, or a key to interpret creation, or the central sun of a philosophy of Providence, but as a Father; His Father and our Father, with redeeming aims and mighty will, benevolent purposes and glorious deeds; with a *character*, whose qualities and spirit are so humanly divine and divinely human, that they may be clearly known and tenaciously held in the grasp of the human intelligence. He is as sure of the Father Spirit, the Author of historical redemption as of the woman who, in her impoverished moral energy, is listening with quickened aspiration to His soul-searching words. "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father."

At least, then, *Jesus* is not an Agnostic. He, the purest of the pure, and the mightiest of the mighty, of conduct most noble and character most elevated, sublime in the promise of His life, and unspeakably more sublime in its achievements; He knew God *as God knew Him*, with a knowledge as real, detailed, intimate and adequate for fellowship and service.

Is not that significant? Does it not stand for values, intellectual and moral, of limitless meaning? Christ is typical and prophetic. He is our example as a thinker and knower. His methods are our patterns, and His assurances our possibilities. His mind was and is what ours may be and should be, in its piercing sight, strong conviction, sweet serenity, and infinite fruitfulness. "We are predestinated to be conformed to the" *intellectual* "image of God's dear Son," so that He may be the first-born and we the after-born in the great brotherhood of thinkers and doers!

Can we—for this is our question—can we climb to the sunlit heights of His full assurance of understanding of these sovereign themes of human thought? Have we faculties enabling us to see and understand God, so that we may say, "We know that which we worship," the Highest, the Absolute Best, the Father, the Spirit; or must we accept the peace of certitude, if we are to have it at all, by blowing out the flickering tapers that burn in our mortal life, and closing our eyes to "the Sun of Righteousness" whose beams fill the heavens of history; and be content to spend our days in the mournful paralysis of an inevitable ignorance? Can we be sure of God, of His real being; of the qualities of His *character*, of what He is in Himself; how He feels towards us; of His share in the spiritual administration under which we live, and the laws we see worked out with such inflexible order from day to day; or are we left to derive our idea of God from the baseless dreams of a disordered fancy, the wild creations of exaggerated fears, or an infinitely extended photograph of ourselves, begotten of our insatiable vanity? In a word, have we men a real Father in Heaven and can we know Him, so that His presence and help shall form an actually available power of healing and redemption for our perplexed and jaded lives?

I need scarcely remind you that a question like this, is at all times of superlative interest, and therefore must just now be charged with extraordinary urgency for all men.

These are the days of the revision and reconstruction of religious knowledge, and in this respect they form the analogue of the days of the Son of Man. He came to

revise the Old Testament, not to destroy it, but to fill out its plan, vindicate its principles, and embody its hopes. By the power of His all-guiding spirit He is achieving similar results to-day. As the word "God" grew and multiplied under His mediatorial revelations till it revolutionized the whole thought and life of men in the first century, so to-day it is becoming so overwhelmingly vast in its significance that some thoughtful souls shrink in real humility from declaring their belief in the awe-inspiring Being whom it faintly denotes. Never was the term so big with meaning as now. As Rothe reminds us, "We owe sincere thanks to the modern atheistic philosophy, because through its means we have first realized what an incomparably great thing it is to maintain the existence of God."* We are getting to the universal basis of all belief and all life, and feel that all our language is vain and our philosophy inadequate to represent the Eternal Spirit as He is disclosed to us in these last days. The ancient idea of God as the "storm-spirit" or the "animating genius of the wind," does not even faintly suggest the exhaustless opulence of the revelation in the clear light of which we are living now.

* "Still Hours"—91. "The word 'God' is very great. He who realizes and acknowledges this will be mild and fair in his judgment of those who frankly confess they have not the courage to say they believe in God."

Fiske ("Idea of God," 170—1) traces our word "God" back to the *Wodan* or *Odin*, the chief object of the worship of our northern forefathers. "This relation of an initial *G* to an initial *W* is a very common one; as for example, *Guillaume* and *William*, *guerre* and *war*, *guardian* and *warden*, *guile* and *wile*. In Germany we have the town names of *Godesberg*, *Gudenberg*, and *Godensholt*, all derived from *Wodan*. In the Westphalian dialect, *Wednesday* ('day of Wodan') is called *Godenstag* or *Gunstag*. *Odin* was also called *Godin*. Wodan was originally the storm-spirit or animating genius of the wind, answering in many respects to the Greek Hermes and the Vedic Sarameyas."

That, however, is only one side of the shield of modern fact; others occupying a different point of view infer from the same phenomenon that we men are not possessed of the faculties requisite for a clear and firm grasp of this wonderful revelation. It is beyond us for evermore. We can know nothing of it. It eludes our feeble powers as the rainbow the hand of the child. We may hope, and wish, and fancy, and deceive ourselves; but we cannot *know*. Agnosticism is as inevitable as death and the grave.

Now, be it observed, it is essential to the existence, solidity, and growth of our manhood, to elevated conduct and noble character, that we do not trifle with this question. Either God can be availably and practically known; known enough for all the needs of a high-pitched life, or He cannot. Either Jesus Christ knew Him or He did not; and we ought to settle for ourselves right away and with all the strenuousness of invincible resolve, what the real facts are. "Intrinsic conviction," says John Morley, "is the mainstay of human advancement." Better a well-convinced and altogether honest denial of God than a slovenly indifference to truth. A lazy acquiescence in the so-called impotence of man to solve the grave problems of God and the Soul, undermines the man and fritters his being down to the pigmiest of fribbles. A commanding grip of principles is the keystone of a coherent character. Tamper with fidelity to conviction and you sap the strength of the vital forces of human progress. Light-hearted neutrality concerning the most momentous of all themes, the reality, character, and availableness of God for men, is as disastrous as it is cowardly. Therefore we ought either to be sure beyond all doubt that

there is no chance of knowing God ; or else we should search for Him with all the heart, and follow on, and still on—till we know whom we have believed and are persuaded that He is able and willing to take care of every thought and purpose, every prayer and deed we commit to Him, against the day of eternal manifestation. For it is not what a man guesses, or dreams, or wishes ; it is what he knows and is sure of ; what he has *verified* or made true to himself in and through life, that is the measure of his peace, the index of his power, and the sign of his growth. If we are to cast out the demons that rend and ruin the life of the world, we must have solid foothold on the rock of principle. If we are to keep out of our hearts the seven devils of secularity, we must have some firmly-established convictions. If we are to speak with a seer's penetration and a prophet's power to a guilty world, God must be more to us than an enigma, or a haunting memory, or an incomprehensible mystery ; He must fill our intelligence without offending any of the laws He has impressed on its action, inspire and hold our hearts by the sweet magnetism of His character ; and complete and unify our broken and fragmentary being by the addition of His own gracious and redeeming fulness. This is the victory that overcometh the world, the flesh, and the devil, even our faith.

Still, let it be noted, the answer to this momentous enquiry is far from being as difficult as it seems. I do not deny the reality or gravity of the difficulty, but I maintain at the outset, that a firm and solid conviction of God's redeeming help, and a clear judgment

of His character, are not in any way dependent upon the *amount* or *range* of our information; but rather upon the use of the right organs of knowledge and the adoption of the appointed methods of verification.

Though we know little, we need not be less positive and assured about it. Limitation of knowledge is not the death of certitude. The far-extending seas of modern knowledge will not swamp us if only we get into the lifeboat of right aims, true affections, and a will firmly set on righteousness.

Robertson says, "Truth is infinite as the firmament above you." So it is; but we may rejoice in the boundless expanse, be sure of the patch of blue above us and of the ray of truth that shines through it, though we cannot embrace its illimitable stretches of beauty and glory. We are, in a restricted sense, all Agnostics, and must always be, about all things. We only know in part. We see fragments of the great whole. Space, for example, is infinite. It is too high and deep and wide for us. We cannot attain to it. It taunts our puny intelligence with its vastness, and yet compels us to use it as a "form of thought;" but we have no misgivings as to the parts of it peopled with the sweet delights and sunny memories of home, and the inspiring and gladdening associations of patriot sires and prophet heroes. A real Agnosticism is for ever being married to a strenuous, practical, and life-enriching Positivism.

Here is a man who knows the sun, and will prove to you that of the sixty or seventy terrestrial elements thirty of them have their place in the solar atmosphere Iron, that enters so largely into our planet and is it chief colouring agent, is there. There dwell zinc and

barium, nickel and potassium. Hydrogen in great abundance is there too; and with it, oxygen, that makes up eight-ninths of the water of our globe, one-third of the crust of the earth, and one-fifth of the air, and is the most ubiquitous of all the "stuff" of which this planet and its clothing are composed. He not only knows the secrets of its constitution—as if he had taken it to pieces in his laboratory, like a watch—but he will tell you its history, and report the mighty total of heat it gives out every year, and yet with all that detailed fulness of knowledge, is he one whit more absolutely certain of sunlight and heat, or of the reality of the sun itself, than the singer who delighted to describe its radiant start in the grey morning as the march of a "strong man rejoicing to run a race?" "'Life!' 'Vitality!'" exclaims the President of the Geological Society in his recent address,* "these terms are but convenient cloaks of our ignorance of the somewhat complicated series of purely physical processes going on within plants and animals. 'Organization.' Why should the term be applied to the molecular structure of an *Amœba* or a yeast-cell and refused to that of a crystal?" So again the confession of ignorance is heard from the scientist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain to it;" and yet who of us has not the full assurance of understanding, in spite of our restricted information, as to the reality and uses of these vital or mineral processes?

Clear your minds, then, I pray, of the idea that Agnosticism necessarily means doubt. It does not. Though we cannot be *sure* of everything, it does not

* Quarterly Journal, Geological Society, vol. xliii. p. 59.

follow that we can be sure of nothing. "We cannot by searching find out the Almighty to perfection." Even Moses could only catch a glimpse of the glory of His goodness, as of the sky crimsoned in the west by the setting sun. No man hath seen God's *face*—the whole bright and full disclosure of Him, at any time. There is a Biblical Agnosticism as there is a personal. Who of us knows his own friend in his totality, his clear piercing intellect, swift fancy, sovereign conscience and resolute will? Every man is a fathomless mystery to his neighbour, and indeed to himself! How much more shall the Father of our spirits be hidden from our ken, and baffle our sustained but feeble efforts to track Him and His ways! "Even Jesus Himself," says Renan, "owed nothing to Greek culture." Marvellously opulent as it was, He did His work without it. Though He said with such irresistible strength of conviction, "We know," yet even His knowledge was limited. He knew what was in man and pierced the secrets of nature and life, of history and humanity, of prophecy and song, as no one ever had before Him, yet, let me say it with deepest reverence, He was not a "University man." He had "letters," though He had never learned from the Rabbis; He spoke with a contagious conviction that compelled the acquiescence of unwilling minds, though He swept by the verbal quibbles of the Scribes and the vacuous debates of the Doctors of the Law, and all the "learning" of the time with as much energy as He swept down upon the reckless mammon-lust of the lawyers and the fierce fights for "station in life" of the Pharisees. And yet it was He, thus limited, who knew the Father so well that, as a boy of twelve, He

took the plan of His life from Him, found His soul's nourishment in doing His will in His manhood, and indeed only once, and then only for a moment and in the gravest of all crises, lost sight of His face, so that He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?": an agonizing cry, but even that gave place on the cross to the calm and acquiescent prayer, breathed in full assurance of faith, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

This is in fact the secret of human progress. Men solidly and immovably built in certitude have been the creators of new epochs, the heralds of new gospels, the saviours of men. "*One thing have I desired* of the Lord, that will I seek after," is the avowal of the man who lifts Hebraism to its highest gladness and adds to the Messiah idea the inspiring element of universal Kingship. "*One thing I know*," says the man born blind, but now seeing. You may cavil and question, contradict and sneer; my ignorance of Moses may appal you: but I know I can see, and all your haughty scepticism and vapid scorn will not make me blind again. "One thing have I *desired*," says Paul, "that the Lord Jesus should give me my life-work; one thing I *know*, that the Lord Jesus has saved me, the chief of sinners, and *one thing I do*—forgetting the things that are behind, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Paul's experience is typical. He is a sample of multitudes of men chosen from all the races subject to the Roman sway, in the days of Nero and Trajan, Hadrian and the Antonines, who had passed swiftly and securely, some from wild sensuality, some from sullen despair, and some from hopeless godlessness, to the

firm grasp of a well-defined and soul-mastering belief in God, the Father and Saviour of men.*

It is as indisputable as that two and two make four, that though we never can fathom all mysteries, reply to all objections, answer all questions, or give hospitality to all knowledge, yet men may know God so as to say with the firmest persuasion and the utmost abandon, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire before Thee?"

It being clear, then, that God cannot be fully known, and that it is not necessary to our welfare that He should be fully known, what is the knowledge we *may* have and *must* have for our real well-being? In what way may we get it, and then test its validity so severely as to make ourselves invincibly sure of God and of His will and purpose concerning us?

Christ gives a full and sufficient answer in the words, "We know that which we worship, for salvation is from

* Isaac Taylor, "The Restoration of Belief," p. 51. "Everywhere—the exceptions are few—throughout the regions which the Mediterranean divides, in cities and in fields, we meet companies of men, even multitudes, who have thrown off the listlessness of scepticism, from whose countenances the sullenness of atheism has been dispelled, and who speak to us in the decisive tones that spring from an accepted and undoubted *belief*. These men show, in their animated looks, and by the determination of their behaviour, that there is in them the vitality of a religious persuasion which they do not distrust. How cordially to be welcomed in such a visitation, as of the morning—if it be the morning! How good a promise was it for mankind of an escape from the gulph towards which the human family was slowly and surely drifting away! A sure hold has at length been found. Some, nay thousands of the people, declare that their feet do touch firm ground in the waters of religious opinion, and that they stand where good standing is. Instead of those inarticulate babblings, as from the frivolous million, and instead of those doleful murmurs of the desponding, the ear now catches the intelligible utterances of men who say they have come into the possession of *certainty* and of hope."

the Jews." We Jews know God and are sure of Him; not because He spoke to our fathers by the prophets; not because we have a written revelation, guarded with extreme care and reverenced with deep awe; but because we are the depositories of salvation for ourselves and for all men. Salvation is of us, comes through us. We are chosen to be its historical channel; its qualified missionaries and distributors. The salvation vindicates and authenticates the revelation, and produces the full assurance of understanding. It is not the other way about. We have the revelation, and therefore must have the salvation; no! not so, but thus,—we are now possessed of the salvation; it comes through us to all men, and therefore we do know God, even the Father. "The true cause of things is their aim." God reveals, not that we may know, but that He may save.

Salvation is life; it is character, heroic obedience, soul enlargement, peace, ethical stability, unselfish service, enthusiasm for righteousness and truth; visions of God; yea, God immanent in human life, as Father and Redeemer, and therefore revealing Himself more and more, unto the perfect day, in multitudinous verifications, so that we know Him, and can more easily doubt our existence than doubt His saving work in us. We are divinely and gloriously saved, and therefore divinely and surely taught.

Now, singular as this statement sounds, yet, like all the teachings of Jesus, it expresses the most human and universal of facts, and conducts us to the most authoritative method of thinking and knowing, and of *knowing that we know*. It tells us, what we see proved every wakeful moment, that nothing assures like life,

or fortifies like experience, or convinces like face-to-face contact with the real experiences of human society. Life is the source of light. "Action is education." All our conquering convictions come that way. We know the justice we preach; for salvation from all national evils is in absolute and unswerving fidelity to justice in all lands and to all races; the weak as well as the strong, and the suspected more than the trusted. We know the liberty we love, for liberty is the root of the tree of manly independence, the foster-mother of patriotism, and the nurse of the virtues. "He that followeth Me," says Christ—that is, he that doeth as I do—"shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" Doing, we see, and as we keep on doing, we become sure that we see and understand. Truth is set in the clear radiance of our deliverance from false thoughts, base passions, wrong aims, and mean deeds, and it becomes as completely incorporate with our being as assimilated food with the body. We know Him—as we know justice and liberty—for His salvation is ours, and "we are persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Does the case cited by Christ prove His principle? Incontestably. Salvation is of the Jews. From them it has gone forth to the ends of the world. It was the goal of their long and painful pilgrimage; the issue of their fierce conflict, the ripened fruit of their struggle, the rich result of their patience and faith, heroism and hope. They were a people saved of the

Lord; and they knew Him through their salvations. God, the God of deliverances, appeared to them in their sorrow and suffering at the burning bush of Horeb; in the days of the exile in Babylon, and in the birth of the Son of the Highest in Bethlehem.

Where will you find a people so completely freed from mental perplexity and intellectual bewilderment about God? They are sure of God as of the eternal hills.* He is God and He is their God. No books show such a grip of God as the Psalms. No men talk with so strong a sense of standing in His presence as the prophets. Through all their mist and darkness He is Israel's Leader, Teacher, and Saviour, shining with ever-brightening clearness on to the days of the Son of Man; so that one of their late singers chanted the exalted strain, highest of all pre-Christian sentiments, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him," and, as Henry Rogers added in the light of the revelation of Jesus, "them that do not fear Him."

Again, to what people and land will you go for evidence of more persistent ethical stability? In the face of manifold and severe temptations, in spite of painful deviations, they bear right onward in the path of righteousness and truth, exhibiting a fortitude and courage only surpassed by those in whom dwelt the all-conquering passion of the cross of Christ. Delivered from all cowardice, they believed in God and were established, as no other nation, in righteousness and true holiness. †

Nor do I know where you will go for a litera-

* "Old Testament Theology," by Dr. Hermann Schultz, vol. ii. p. 100, *et seq.*

† Ibid., p. 46, *et seq.*

ture of hope, so surpassingly rich as that of our Old Testament. These Jews, feeble folk though they be, are delivered from the dreary despairs that make life an intolerable oppression, providence an unsolved enigma, and existence an irritating blunder. They are saved by hope, because they know by experience that deliverances belong to God, even their God.

The Samaritans had lost this buoyant and irrepressible hopefulness, this finer instinct of righteousness, this sweeter thought of the Eternal. They did not *know* God, for they had cut themselves off from the continuing streams of God's salvation. With blind and fatuous folly they clung exclusively to Moses and the five books that bore ample traces of his sublime workmanship, as though God had ceased to speak to men after the illustrious leader died on Mount Hor; and in their narrowness refused to follow on to know the Lord, who continued to speak through prophet and psalmist, seer and king. "Ye worship that which ye know not," said Christ, "we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews." *

Then, our assurance of God does not depend upon the use of our speculative faculties primarily, but on the practical powers every man *can* use, and, owing to the sweet compulsions of every-day life, *must* use. If assurance came by the theological route, then faultless methods of reasoning, scientific interpretation of Biblical documents, and elaborate investigation of the currents of Christian thought, would be requisite for our certitude; but it does not come to many by that method. Knowledge is good as a tool, but it is a tool and not an end in itself; and the tool is to be

* "Old Testament Theology," by Dr. Hermann Schultz, vol. ii. p. 334, *et seq.*

used for the purposes comprehensively described in the great word "Salvation." "Any tyro," says Professor Huxley, "can see the facts for himself if he is provided with those not rare articles, a nettle and a microscope." So we say any man can see the spiritual facts for himself if he will use the four telescopes close to his hands, known as Intuition, Science, History, and Life. If you set your telescope accurately, you bring within its chamber the image of some distant star, itself the centre of a solar system; so if we adjust these telescopes according to fixed spiritual laws, we shall get into the chamber of the mind such an image of God as will enable us to say, "He is glorious in holiness," great in redemption, wonderful in His workings for the sons of men, ever merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.

Nay more. Browning is as faultlessly true as he is clear, when he says :—

> "I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
> Would'st thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?
> In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
> Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
> Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!" *

Christ is the Logos, the Word, clearly expressing, in the language in which every man was born, the wonderful works of God. He is before all things, and without Him was not anything made that was made. He is the centre, the purpose, the crown, and flower of all human history. He has brought life and immortality to light; shown the solidarity of all interests in the universe, the absence of all conflicts save with

* Browning's Works, vol. vii. p. 139, "A Death in the Desert."

evil, a conflict which He is to end victoriously. He causes the down-shining of the pure idea of God into the heart of man, and so re-unites man to God and re-enthrones God in and over man. The intuitions of the soul are interpreted in Him; the fullest disclosures of the sciences concerning man and his spiritual education are anticipated in Him; the chief lessons of history are summed up in Him; He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Salvation is from the Jews; from this Jew, Christ Jesus. If you really see Him; the heart, the mind, the spirit of Him, you see the Father; you know God, and are as sure of Him as of "your breathing," and feel "Him nearer than hands and feet." "For this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

But this is only the beginning. We must follow on to know, by the use of the verifying efforts which Jesus Himself adopted, and from whose accumulated results He spake to men with such an accent of conviction and penetrating authority, that men felt something of exaltation and wonder, as though they had listened to the very speech of God.

The sources of divine knowledge stand open night and day. They are never closed. He that is of the truth may always hear the divine voice. God is never dumb. Our conclusions admit of perpetual verification, and our confidence is susceptible of daily accessions of strength. We are always in the laboratory. Our experiments are never ended. Experience tests faith, shows its strength, re-acts on it, re-inforces it, and we are encouraged to use it more and more. Fresh

occasions of conflict and doubt, prayer and waiting, resistance and obedience, make life a school, in which fresh points of view are afforded us from day to day, new mental positions are taken, and new windows opened into the truth of God. Difficulties, collisions, disappointments, duties, problems of evil and good, give us opportunities, test principles, form character, and enable us to realize the true grandeur of the revelation of God in Christ.

The scientist must wait to verify conclusions he has reached by the observation of the transit of Venus, and not only wait, but take his apparatus to the ends of the earth, and then perhaps only have three or four clouded seconds in which to observe his facts. The geologist is waiting for the disentombing of the buried coffins of the bygone forms of life, before he can vindicate his theories. Tyndall has not yet manufactured the instrument capable of verifying his hypothesis of a universal ether; and it is doubtful whether he ever will. But we can verify our cardinal spiritual truths and laws without going a yard out of our daily life. Standing where we are, and doing our work as God meant us, we can prove what is the perfect and acceptable will of God. Starting with the saying of John Stuart Mill, "Not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our action;" we may meet our duties as they come, with patience, guilelessness, sincerity, and faith, patterned after his; and discover by this truly "inductive method," our knowledge growing from more to more, out of our successive practical experiments—each

checking the other, and all entering into the structure of life and character, till we attain to the knowledge of the Father, full of peace and joy and life everlasting.

For example, is not the use of *Intuition*—of the direct gaze of the soul on creation and life—operative from day to day, compelling the recognition of a Presence and a Power, as the clearest and most real of all facts? Who will contradict Faust when he says, "So long as the tranquil dome of heaven is raised above our heads, and the firm-set earth is spread forth beneath our feet, while the everlasting stars course in their mighty orbits, and the lover gazes with ineffable tenderness into the eyes of her that loves him, so long must our hearts go out towards Him that upholds and comprises all." Life sees life; and in life sees law, order, mind, and heart. Man will have to be altered structurally, in the real "make" of him, before he will be able to "reduce the infinite creative music of the universe to the monotonous clatter of an enormous mill, swung by the stream of chance—in fact, a mill without a builder or a miller, grinding itself with a perpetual motion." "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth speaks His praise," not with less, but increasing clearness and cogency throughout the rolling years. Prof. Blackie, speaking of "the growth of religious liberty in Scotland," sums all up in the words:—

"Creeds and confessions? Well, I will confess
An honest creed. Where'er I look abroad
I see the living form and face of God,
Which men call Nature, all whose loveliness
I garner in my soul with pious care;
And when I look within in thoughtful hour,
I feel a shaping presence and a power
That makes me know the same great God is there.

> What more?—That were enough, had men been true
> To their best selves; but by base lust enticed
> They fell: till God stretched forth His hand, and drew
> Them from the mire, by His own son, the Christ.
> Leave me to Him, in His bright face to see
> God's imaged will, from gloss and dogma free!"

Yes; but what does *Science* in her physical and metaphysical departments contribute to this verification of our faith in the living God?

Well, what?

Why this! That in this age of ideas—an age whose grandeur in this respect dwarfs all preceding ages—this idea of God is deepest, most central and most essential of all that get a place in human thought. A work of scientific weight and authority on this subject, John Fiske's "Idea of God," distinctly maintains that the total result of human inquiry in all its departments is to prove, (1) the existence of an Energy, infinite and omnipresent, underlying and comprehending all the phenomena of the universe; (2) that this same Force is working for righteousness, *i.e.*, towards the evolution of the highest spiritual qualities of man. "Salvation" indeed is being achieved through these ages of discipline. The welfare of man is the ultimate goal of the universe. And (3) the clear verdict of the same science is that this *force* is personal and not impersonal, is indeed a living and a holy will.* Thus, science is assisting in building up the

* Fiske ("Idea of God," xxv. p. 44). "And as thus, age after age, men wrangle with their eyes turned away from the light, the world goes on to larger and larger knowledge in spite of them, and does not lose its faith, for all these darkeners of council may say. As in the roaring loom of Time the endless web of events is woven, each strand shall make more and more clearly visible the living garment of God."

John Addington Symonds says in his article in the *Fortnightly* (June, 1887) on the "Progress of Thought in our Time":—"The main fact in the intellectual development of the last half century" is "the

creed by which men live, aiding in the collection and harmonization of all truth, and affording support to those conceptions that guide conduct and shape character.

But it is in the long, complex, and chequered history of our race that the verifications of our Christianity appear with the most convincing cogency and splendid fulness. History is the revelation of God. The Bible is a few pages of the divine biography, pages of unexampled brilliance and unequalled value, showing the action of God in the history of human redemption. "Salvation is from the Jews," but the thrilling annals of the children of Abraham form only a part of the total story of God's redeeming work for men. Re-

restoration of spirituality to our thoughts about the universe." And again—"It cannot be too emphatically insisted on that the much dreaded Darwinism leaves the theological belief in a Divine Spirit untouched. God is not less God, nor is creative energy less creative, because we are led to suppose that a lengthy instead of a sudden method was employed in the production of the Kosmos. The conceptions of God and Law tend to coalesce in the scientific theory of the Universe. In other words, spirituality is restored to Nature, which comes to be regarded as a manifestation of infinite vitality."

Herbert Spencer says:—"The consciousness of an inscrutable Power manifested to us through all phenomena has been growing ever clearer, and must eventually be freed from all its imperfections. The certainty that, on the one hand, such a Power exists, while, on the other hand, its nature transcends intrusion and is beyond imagination, is a certainty towards which intelligence has from the first been progressing. To this conclusion *science* inevitably arrives as it reaches its confines; whilst to this conclusion religion is irresistibly driven by criticism; and, satisfying as it does the demands of the most rigorous logic at the same time that it gives the religious sentiment the widest possible sphere of action, is the conclusion we are bound to accept without reserve or qualification."

Professor Tait ("Recent Advances of Physical Science," p. 24) says:—The very basis of nature "implies the absolute necessity of an intervention of creative power."

J. B. Crozier ("Civilization and Progress") affirms that "the contrivance of the world must still be held due to an intelligent Will."

J. S. Mill says:—"The laws of nature do not account for their own origin."

demption is the pivot on which the entire human story turns. There's not a line of it that does not prove, that to deliver the world of men, to get rid of sin and death, "to make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness" at any cost, the most acutely painful—that of the sacrifice of His only begotten Son—is and has been the aim of God from the beginning. The whole past is labelled aright by Bunsen in the brief phrase, "God in History," and all history is typically represented in that of the Hebrew race. They have a revelation because there is to be a salvation. And God speaks to men because He will save them from evil and lift them to holiness. History is thus one long witness for God. To the question of the poet, Lewis Morris, we respond with a well sustained "yes," when he asks:—

> "Or shall this faith rather be ours, that the infinite plan
> Is worked by a gradual Miracle bettering the Race,
> Since the quickening Spirit breathed on the sea's dead face,
> And the faint life stirred, which one day should blossom in Man!"

The French preacher who was asked by his king for one short argument for the Christian religion, said in one emphatic word, "Sire, the Jews!" might have found a shorter word and a fuller fact, if he had said, "Sire, MAN!"

O heirs of the ages, students of the richly storied past, fortify your faith in God by the clear and cogent witness of sixty generations of Christian progress. Read the logic of facts! Behold the man Christ Jesus, the desire of all nations, the goal of all the centuries, the light of all life, the key to all the past, because He is the author of an everlasting redemption. Recognise His incarnation and sacrifice as the re-entry of God to the heart of man by the revelation of the

purely unselfish and loving heart of the Father. Take His life as the ideal of service, and His character as the pattern of manhood, and as you see all the lines of history converging towards Him, believe and love, love and adore, adore and obey, obey and enjoy!

But whilst thus strengthened with might in the inward man by the accumulated and compacted witness of the history of men of like passions with yourselves in their search after God; and sustained in the presence of vast mysteries opened up by investigation and research, by the solid and indisputable rules of science; and unconsciously but powerfully upheld by the immediate response of the universe and the soul to your deepest spiritual instincts and yearnings; yet you will derive your largest aids from your personal devotion to Christ, your acceptance of His daily discipline, and sincere effort to do all His will.

Settle it in your minds that faith will grow as it is used, and assurance increase with experience of the divine love and care. Life will yield calm confidence and serene trust, as sunshine heat and growth. I speak that which I know. Doubts will come, but not to stay, if each day be bravely and manfully lived. God will "write His laws in your hearts," make them incorporate with the very structure of your new being, so that you will be ready to stake your life on them. Each honest, trustful, and sustained effort to imitate Christ will bring Him nearer to you and you nearer to Him, till you feel that "*to live* is Christ." Days of duty done will grow arguments as spring days grow foliage, summer days fruit. The endeavour to live a patient, self-denying, godly, unselfish life, will supply confirmation stronger than holy writ, and more invin-

cible than all creeds. You will have the "Bible" not only of the letter, but of the spirit, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God. I do not say all mystery will be made clear, all the problems of divine government solved, and the access of morbid doubt or of mental perplexity completely and for ever barred. But you will not confound a melancholy begotten of the disturbance of the biliary ducts with the permanent facts of the universe, or regard a passing cloud as the extinction of the sun, or a ghastly failure as the annihilation of hope, or an unanswerable question as the refutation of plain and undeniable truths, but in these days of gloom you will remember the light you have seen in other days, the truths you have proved before; and the recall of luminous hours or moments of transfiguration will uphold you in Gethsemane's garden, and inspire the heroism of a self-sacrifice that calmly bears right onward, even unto the death of the cross.*

But for this daily access of assurance you must be willing to pay a high price. It is a "pearl" for which, if need be, you must part with all you have. Therefore you must severely watch against the temptations that spring out of your work as students and thinkers. Never imagine that distinction in intellectual gymnastics is a guarantee of moral worth, or that a man's life consists in the abundance of the propositions he can prove, or indeed that he obtains any more vital force from his assent to the affirmation,

* A. Monod. "Letters"—254. "The readiness with which I passed in a few days, or even in one day, from unbelief to faith, whilst it is to me clear proof of the work of God in me, proves to me also, to my great satisfaction, that I was never an unbeliever through a disposition to unbelief, but only through melancholy and a tormenting imagination."

"God is," than from assenting to the statement that "the whole is greater than its part." As a liberal education may rob a man of his individuality, destroy his spontaneity and mental spring, so facility in discussing the forms of faith may sap the vigour and mar the beauty of the spirit-life. "It is easy," Joubert profoundly says, "to believe in God if you will not attempt to define Him." Over-definition is our snare, and over-definition generates scepticism; and scepticism, though it may open the heart of the earnest to a larger faith in God, and make more room for the Spirit in the soul of the superstitious, has yet to be stoutly resisted. It kills affection, narrows the horizon of life, makes character poor, shuts the eyes to the apocalypse of God and Heaven, and renders a noble and elevated manhood an impossibility.

We must, therefore, be sober in the use of definition, strong in the daily conversion of faith into Christ-like deed. Set God in Christ "before your face," in the full and clear view of your whole life, and not merely a definition of Him before your logical faculty; "set Him before your face *always*," at your "right *hand*," on those sides of your being where the powers are mightiest; set Him there, keep Him there, and keep everything away that would dim your eyes to His beauty, or harden your heart to His tender appeals, or dull your hearing of His commands. Avoid the self-complacency of the Pharisee, the pleasure-lust of the Sybarite, the apathy of the Sadducee, the learned "trifling" of the Scribes, the hard hypocrisy of the Doctors of the Law, and the insincerity and cruelty of the priests. Man must be spiritually and morally developed in order to understand God and be sure of

Him. Translate the rules of virtuous living into a concrete life like Christ's. Make it your first business to be accepted of Him. Maintain a manly, straightforward, and robust sincerity in spiritual facts and issues. They *are* first, seek them first, find them first, keep them first—always first. Are you poor? So was He. Have you no friends? He was without a home. Are you solitary, opposed, scorned? "God was his pavilion from the strife of tongues." Be not afraid; meet the new day with new heroism; face the new task with undespairing courage. Overcome evil with good. Give benedictions for bitterness, and prayers for curses. Live for the service of man; and, as sure as you are men, the clouds will lift, the fog will disappear. Your "path will be as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," and God Himself, in all the sweetness of His grace and plenitude of His power, will be your exceeding great reward.*

* Brother Lawrence in the "Practice of the Presence of God," sums up his experience in the words:—"That the most excellent method he had found of going to God was that of doing our common business (as far as we are capable) purely for the love of God. That God never failed offering us His grace in each action. That he himself distinctly perceived this offer, never failing to do so, unless he had wandered from a sense of God's presence, or had forgot to ask His assistance. That our sanctification did not depend on our changing our works, but in doing for God's sake what we commonly do for our own."

HOW TO BE SURE OF THE VOICE OF GOD.

"If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then show me a sign that it is thou that talkest with me."—JUDGES vi. 17.

GIDEON, one of the greatest of the Judges of Israel, was a mighty man of valour; and wore, as one of the signs of his real greatness, the robe of modesty as a garment, whilst, like his predecessor Moses, he shrank from tasks involving grave responsibilities and vast issues, in a spirit of severe and painful self-distrust. Not that he wished to shirk duty; but that he panted to be sure of the voice of God, and, therefore, invented and varied his devices or "tests" so that he might obtain, somehow or other, a full assurance of understanding and of faith, that in all he did he was obeying the mandate of Israel's God.

As to some of us, so to him, the first whispers of the divine voice fall on his ears whilst he is at his ordinary work, "beating out the wheat" in the wine-press at Ophrah. Louder and louder God speaks to him; and the more urgent and sonorous the call, the more frankly he tells his doubts, and the more rigidly he uses his tests. Now he waits for the fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice on the altar, and now for the nightly dew to saturate "the fleece of wool" without sprinkling with its sparkling globes the ground on which it rests. It is done, but, still quivering with the fear

of misconception, he dares to push his experiments to the uttermost, and wholly reverses the conditions of the problem, to find the conviction of a divine warrant for his work seizing him with such overpowering might that he becomes forthwith as prompt and efficient in deed as he was cautious and self-renouncing in spirit; rises up like Luther to protest against and destroy the enslaving idolatries of his countrymen; proclaims with conquering eloquence the claims of Jehovah; rallies the dispirited tribes against their invaders; and finally gives back to long-oppressed Israel its glorious heritage of divine religion and political freedom.

That is an old-world picture of an abiding human fact, a Hebrew setting of a widespread experience. Gideon's methods are not ours and cannot be. His tests do not belong to our age; but we inherit his keen struggle for truth, face his sphinx-like problem of certitude, and share his insatiable hunger for the veritable Word of God as to the tasks we should undertake, the protests we should utter, and the "causes" we should champion through conflict to victory. We, too, want the peace and power begotten of a full assurance of understanding the voice of God in the conduct of life.

The following case was given in a public meeting. I cite it, not because of the subject to which it refers, but because it is a forcible statement of a typical instance of a large class of questions on which Christians are asking how to be sure of the voice of God:—

Some time since, three men were living in the city of Norwich, eminent in piety and intelligence, and

equally, as far as man could judge, delighted to be in subjection to the leadings of the Spirit of God.

One was a "Friend," and held that the rite of Baptism, though suitable and salutary for the age in which it arose, was never intended to survive it. As an ordinance it was elementary and transitional, and had no abiding place in the dispensation of the Spirit.

The other two strenuously taught the perpetual obligation of the law of Baptism. But one said "immersion" was the only New Testament Baptism, and believers the only persons who ought to receive it; whilst the third maintained that "sprinkling a few drops of water" was compliance with the will of Christ, and that "babes" ought to be introduced to the Church by way of that ordinance. "Which of these three, equally good and holy men," said the speaker, "thinkest thou, was really obeying the voice of God?"

Lifting this particular case into the realm from which it is taken, we ask, how are we to be sure, not only that our *Conduct*, but also that our *Beliefs*, as Christians, are according to the mind of God; that we give hospitality to none but divine ideas concerning such themes as the "Church"; the "revelation" made to prophets and apostles: the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and the duty and destiny of man?

This, then, is the actual conflict of our time; the problem fundamental to all our thinking. We sigh and struggle for clear, intelligent, and well-reasoned conviction. We want to be as sure of God in conduct and thought, in deed and idea, as we are of gases and minerals, of chemical tests and re-agents, of the laws of motion amongst the stars, and the principle of

period.* Professor Dana requires forty-eight million years as the minimum of time since the commencement of the deposition of what are known as the Silurian rocks in Wales. How much he would add to get to the first germ of life I have not seen; but Sir William Thompson takes one hundred millions of years for geological time. Professor Haughton multiplies that interesting but incomprehensible figure by two. Others require thousands of millions for the same period. In fact the data are so insufficient, and the methods of calculatian so different, that a full assurance of understanding can hardly be expected by the most sanguine on this and many similar inquiries.

I will only remind you of the conflict of opinion concerning the experiments of Pasteur for the cure of hydrophobia; of the prolonged battle of the schools, not only as to medicine, but even as to the very principles of the healing art; and of the fierce controversies concerning the science of political economy. And this I do, not for a moment, to throw doubt on the actual and established conclusions of science; but simply that we may not think that incertitude is limited to the themes which interest the theologian and the moralist, to questions of duty and religion, but is a mark of our universal condition, a sign of the feebleness of our forces, and of the limitations of our life, and so long as we only "know in part" we must expect to have an enfeebling uncertainty at some points in all departments of human knowledge. †

* "Where did Life Begin?" by G. H. Scribner, p. 19.

† Tischendorf says:—"It belongs to the humility and strength of science to acknowledge that there are also mysteries in it which it has not fathomed."

Restraining our expectations, then, by the obvious limitations of the range of knowledge, we now ask, on what conditions may we expect the angel of certitude to descend and dwell with us?

Perhaps the readiest and most frequented of all roads to certainty is that of allowing, at a stroke, an external, visible, dogmatic, and ecclesiastical authority to decide all we shall believe as true, and all we shall accept as fact. No method is so effective in saving trouble; and few processes so swiftly diffuse through the soul an enviable quiet. How many a jaded and perplexed Protestant has coveted the external quietism of the Papist! What a luxury of repose steals over the soul of the man who can take the *ipse dixit* of a priest as final, and the verdict of a Church as infallible! How much some wearied and agonized seeker after truth would give if he could only be content with the "confirmation strong" of "chapter and verse," and in total disregard of the original meaning of either and both! No doubt it is mental suicide; still it is peace. It is the abnegation of manhood, but it is rest-bringing. It is an invincible barrier to progress, but if only carried far enough, it hushes the voice of doubt, and suppresses all scepticism. It is, moreover, false and delusive; for a man may cling to, and fight for, the external authority of Pope, or "Church," or "book," and yet suffer the truth and experience of religion wholly to elude his grasp. The Indians, pursued by their enemies, reached a spot which appeared to them a safe retreat and a sure refuge. They erected their wigwams, enjoyed the chase, and cried "Alabama! Alabama." "Here we may rest." But, alas, it was not for long. The enemy appeared again, and they

had once more to flee. So these fascinating resting-places, built *outside* the soul of man, are sure to give way. The despotism of dogma as dogma over the minds of men is dying, and not even the fiat of a Pope, or the activity of all the Churches, or the assertions of all the Creeds, can revive it. The "authority of the Scribes and Pharisees" is giving place to the sovereignty of Him who speaks to the soul of man as no one else ever did or can, and who is Himself sweetly persuading the souls He instructs and saves to appeal from all lower tribunals to His own gracious and rightful authority. In the language of Pascal, Christian men are more than ever learning to say, with one voice, "*Ad tribunal tuum, Jesu Christe, appello.*" *

But whilst the tendency in most minds is to look outside themselves for the angel of certitude, the tendency of others is to gaze exclusively *within*, and see in the fiery intensity and white-heat glow of feelings the infallible sign of her beneficent presence. They are sure because they *feel* so sure. They must be moved divinely, for they feel so strongly. How can they be led by any other than the Spirit of God, when they are so pervaded and overswayed by strong emotion? Rational proof is superseded. The blazing fire is an infallible sign of the presence of God. Victor Hugo says he is immortal, because he is conscious of feeling so; and according to him no one is entitled to believe in his personal persistence after death unless he feels his immortality, which amounts to declaring that feeling is the test of truth, and that the austerities and follies of Simon Stylites must be of God, because

* "Apologetics: or Christianity Defensively Stated," by Dr. A. B. Bruce, 493—513.

Simon himself is seized and overpowered by the successive waves of self-denying emotion. Not only in the early days, but in our own, it is requisite to repeat the injunction, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *prove* the spirits whether they are of God."

Mark, I do not impeach that great teacher Schleiermacher, who taught that "religious feeling" is *one* organ of truth. I know it is. The feeling of absolute dependence is a perennial source of religion, an integral part of the human consciousness, and of immense fruitfulness in life and thought. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love;" but a full assurance of feeling, *in itself*, only guarantees a certain temper of mind, not necessarily a perception of truth; witnesses to a quick susceptibility to convert ideas into emotions, not necessarily to the guidance of the Spirit of God; is, in short, only the present consent of myself to a part of myself, and not necessarily the consent of my whole being to the will and authority of the Eternal God.

Akin to these methods of acquiring certitude of conviction is a third, viz., that of consenting to restrict the range of inquiry within the narrowest possible limits; refusing the attempt to understand the grounds and bases of faith, and accepting the opiates of ease and laziness for all the questions of the brain and life. If a man merely wishes to know whether fire burns, or a wall resists, or oxygen supports life, or a picture pleases, or faith in Christ's redemption brings peace; if that is all he asks and desires, he can soon get what he wants, and enjoy a languid and impotent security. The fire will burn his finger, and convince him; the wall will repel his blow, and enlighten him;

oxygen will quicken his pulse, and assure him; the picture will meet his fancy, and delight him; and as surely the Saviour will respond to his trusting love, and calm him. But if he is anxious to know anything more than these most elementary facts; if he wishes to master and direct the forces of electricity; to discover his duty as the administrator of a fortune, to be sure of his methods of saving a persistently and defiantly rebellious son; to elect the best vocation for himself in the world out of half-a-dozen all before him; to fix the canons of taste; to establish the standard of beauty; to trace the spirit and drift of the ages; to discover the import of the revelation of God in Christ; to get at the meaning of the atonement; to know which of all the Churches is most in harmony with the divine mind;—to do all these things, or some of them, then he must take pains; his nature must be alert, his mind free from bias, his research extended, his methods faultless. In short, the more we want to be sure about, the more we must take pains; and the higher the character and wider the range of truths and facts about which we want full assurance of faith, the more sedulous, consecrated, cautious, and capable we require to be. There is a loud-voiced assurance which is only the bellowing of ignorance; a certitude which would instantly disappear if only its possessor could be fortunate enough to receive one touch of the Ithuriel spear of knowledge. It is the assurance of the child who thinks the rainbow is resting on the grass of the next field, and not that of Newton, who knows where it really is and how all its radiant beauty has been produced. As we are to "be men in mind," we shall not resist the doctrine that we

cannot obtain certainty without effort—nor gain the clear and full sight of the face of eternal truth without courage and wisdom, prolonged labour, and whole-souled consecration to God.

So now we come to the answer which science itself has to give as to how we are to work, what conditions we must observe, and what methods we must use, if we would become possessors of this higher and wider certainty.

Directly we experiment with the forces and facts around us we obtain a response. We consider the lilies, how they grow; we observe the strata of the earth, what they contain, and how they are placed in relation to each other; we operate with the retorts, crucibles, blow-pipes, and tests of the chemist; repeat our observations and experiments till we have eliminated all seen chances of error; investigate our causes and effects; Gideon-like, reverse and rearrange the conditions of our problems, until we become sure of the voice of God as to the growth of a lily and of a planet, the fixed proportions in which the elements of the earth combine with one another, and the laws which great Nature ever obeys. We know God's mind, and distinctly hear His message to us; and are as sure about the behaviour of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbonic acid towards life as we are that fire burns. We have carried out the process of verification by *observation*, *experiment*, and *interpretation*. Verification is making true to ourselves, and by this threefold method we make true to ourselves the facts and laws of God's world; and know that

> "Earth's crammed with Heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God;"

that the material universe is God's ever-changing garment, woven of the changing clouds, the fruitful trees, the fragrant and beautiful flowers, the moving waters, and the golden light of the sun. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." We are sure of the voice of God in the facts and laws surrounding us, and sing psalms to His praise with a fully assenting intelligence.

But let me take another enquiry. "How can I be sure at what point of our globe vegetable and animal life began? Did it start at the tropics, or at the north pole? In the latitude and longitude of England, or India, or Greenland? I cannot experiment; that is out of the question. I could not observe; I was not there. What must I do? Something like this. First, I may safely assert that life must have started in those parts of the earth which were first prepared to receive and nourish it. It could not begin anywhere else. Next, it is clear from known data that our earth was once too hot for life of any kind, and, therefore, the parts that cooled first would be the first prepared for life. Further, it is provable that those parts would cool first which received least heat from the sun, and sent out more heat into space, and those parts would be the north and south poles; so by this process of what may be briefly called *reasoning*, I make myself sure that life must have started at the poles. This is verification—not by observation only—though the results of observations and experiments enter into it, but by reasoning.*

* For the full statement of the facts and reasonings of this case, see a capital little book on "Where did Life Begin?" by G. Hilton Scribner.

Professor Tyndall believes in the existence of universal ether. Why? He has not seen it; it has not been touched or weighed by him. But he holds that it surrounds and invests all objects, and is the necessary condition of material forces, and the indispensable medium of light. How does he reach this conclusion? By reasoning, or by what he calls "the scientific use of imagination," the last step of which is really an act of *faith*, crowning and perfecting a long and carefully conducted process of reasoning.

One other scientific method of making truth for ourselves must be reported. The question is asked, "Is man free?" and you reply that he is as much the subject of necessity and of causation as the stones on which he walks, or the planet by which he is carried through space; and yet he meets your strongly-supported allegations with a flat denial. "See," says he, "here is my arm, it is bone moved by muscle; but what moves the muscle? I am sure that it is moved by my will; I declare that within the area of my organism I am free. Moreover my experience is like that of all men." His appeal to his consciousness makes true to him the central human quality of freedom. He is sure of the voice of God concerning this regal prerogative. As a self-evident, necessary, and universal truth, there stands out before him in lines of inextinguishable light the eternal fact of his freedom of choice. To him this test is final and irreversible, and typical of that body of facts and truths which we verify by the individual and collective consciousness of humanity.

So by three scientific roads the angel of certitude is sent forth to minister to those who are the heirs of knowledge. Not by one only and exclusively, but by

all three; not by one without the other, but by the use of all—sometimes separately, and sometimes conjointly; and first by the plain, hard, macadamized road of *experiment*, *observation*, and *interpretation;* secondly, by the higher level of accurate and painstaking *reasoning;* and, lastly, by the ancient route of human consciousness, or of *truths self-evident, necessary, and universal.*

But somebody says, Do not the truths of religion and conduct form a separate class, reached by the exercise of a separate and distinct faculty, and tested by entirely different criteria? I answer, No. We have exactly the same methods of gaining certainty; use exactly the same powers, though we employ different tools and move amongst higher facts.*

We do not use the retorts of the chemist, but we acquire truth by experiment, *i.e.* we learn the will of God by doing it. We do not observe the same facts, nor study among the "sticks and stones"; but we get at the laws of the spiritual life by watchful attention to the rise and progress of religion in the soul of the individual, and in the collective corporate consciousness of the great Christian community.

Does the scientist reason and compare, set out his

* Max Müller says:—"There is in man a third faculty, which I will simply call the faculty of apprehending the Infinite, not only in religion, *but in all things;* a power independent of sense and reason, but yet a very real power, which has held its own from the beginning of the world, neither sense nor reason being able to overcome it, while it alone is able to overcome both reason and sense."—"The Science of Religion," p. 20. But in a former section we saw Tyndall's use of the "faith faculty" in science; and it will be found that whatever designations we give to the power by which men apprehend spiritual and moral phenomena, the tests of moral and spiritual truths are not changed—the methods of verification, or making true to self are, and remain, universal.

facts in classes, and deduce broad and general truths? We too compare spiritual things with spiritual, the revelation that came by Moses with that which came by Isaiah and Paul, and all with those which reached the souls that feared God and wrought righteousness in India and China, in Persia and Turkey, and that still find men in England and Australia.

Must we fall back on self-evident truths? Are these the rock-bed on which we build our knowledge-edifices? How completely may we Christians avail ourselves of the self-evident truths of morals, the necessary principles of religion, and the universal laws of the Spirit! The soil of the field may be turned over by the steam-plough or the hand-spade—the tools differ, but the method is one and the same, viz., that of exposing the hidden soil to the renewing influence of light and heat and air, and setting free and redistributing its fertilizing mineral elements. So the tools of the chemist and the Christian are not alike, but their methods and conditions are always analogous and mostly the same. There are diversities of operations, but one method and one spirit.

Let us now examine a case, a crucial instance, and see how our principles work. The Bereans have just listened to the teaching of Paul and Silas concerning Jesus Christ. The message is strange and disturbing. It professes to be an advance upon, and not an antagonism to, the Jewish faith. What shall they do? How shall they make sure that Paul is or is not an echo of the divine voice? Instantly and with the instinct of loyalty to all truth, they appeal to the Old Testament, examining the Scriptures diligently

to see whether the words of Paul are in keeping with its statements. For that Scripture is the best test of spiritual truth experience has yet revealed to them. To them it is the highest truth. It is incorporate with their lives, and speaks with all the authority of tested truth. Experiment and observation have made it a verifying organ of the highest power; and at once they use it, with the result that they accept Christ as their Saviour and Master, and join themselves to the society of believers on His name.

Now suppose they should meet with another teacher of strange things ten years afterwards, what would they do? Go back to the Old Testament? No! They have outgrown it. By the use of that test they have created another and better: for in these ten years they have learnt to know as their standard—not a new book, for the four Gospels are not written—not a Pauline creed, for the Epistles are not creeds—but CHRIST JESUS HIMSELF; an inward sovereign and authoritative witness, in immediate contact with the soul, as the metals and gases of the laboratory are with the tests of the chemist; and yielding to them such a conviction of full, final, and irresistible truth that they are prepared to give their blood in its defence, or to use their lives in its propagation. Here, then, is that saying true, "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life"; and here is that law exhibited, "He that believeth on the Son hath the witness"—not in a Church, or a priest, or a pope, or a book—but "in himself"; a divine response to an act of trust; an outflow of exhaustless resources of benediction and grace to a spirit that loves and hopes and obeys. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit which

confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." The voice of Christ is the voice of God; and once sure of the Eternal Son we are sure of the living and loving Father. This is an infallible touchstone for all who can use it. "To whom else should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It is at once the source and the test of religious knowledge.

Now in that case the whole man acts, and the use of all the methods of attaining certitude is exemplified. Christ's direct appeal to the consciousness of guilt and sin invites and rewards faith. The beauty of His holiness and the perfection of His ethical teaching quicken the conscience. His self-sacrifice, even unto death, wins and nourishes love. His fulfilment of the prophetic hope satisfies and enlarges the understanding; but above all, and in all, and through all, the most potent factor is the soul's experience of all He is to, and can do with, our weak and decrepit nature. The fruit of the spirit of Christ in us is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance, and as the cluster hangs on the tree of life it is unimpeachable evidence of the power and grace of the divine husbandman who owns it. Vico, the Italian philosopher, taught that "the criterion of truth, the rule by which we certainly know it, *is to have made it*." Verifying spiritual truth is, according to his view, "only possible through producing or making it within our experience. We only know by practical realization," or what we call, after our Puritan fathers, "experimental evidence." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or no," is "a teaching of universal and extreme scientific significance in the

highest sphere to which man's reason can attain."* Paul gives the experiential origin of the invincible persuasion of a deathless union with the eternal love when he says that tribulation works patience, and patience probation or experience, and experience hope, and hope putteth not to shame, because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.†

It is this personal experience of what Christ is—this personal dealing in faith and hope and love with the central fact of Christianity, Christ Jesus himself; with the work of the risen Christ, the present activities of the Holy Spirit in the re-making of men—it is this accounts for the seeming ease with which simple and earnest souls pass into the possession of the joy unspeakable and full of glory. The famous saying of Ambrose has a profound significance: "It hath not pleased the Lord to give His people salvation in dialectic"; and yet the history of the conversion of his disciple Augustine warns us against concluding that "dialectic" has no place in securing salvation. It is this personal experience accounts for the sublime confidence of death-daring martyrs and confessors, and the solid steadfastness of the saints of God in resisting the shock and onset of the gates of Hell. It is this accounts for the clear percep-

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tion and swift decision and heroic self-suppression of the leaders of spiritual revolution.* They know the way they take, and are sure it is the highway of God, because they know Christ as we know the world we are in—by touching it. They are in immediate contact with Him, verifying, *i.e.* making true to themselves that He is "the Truth" from day to day; sure with a practical working certainty of the voice of Christ as to their conduct, and their thought; and as much bound never to deny Him, as the astronomer is bound not to contradict the law of gravitation. This is the all and in all of their certitude. Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" shows a face full of beauty and pathetic loveliness, but most suggestive of calm power blended with kind and irresistible authority. The Christian lives in sight of that face daily, and as he gazes rejoices to say "Master and Lord." His word is final; His example complete; His authority unique; His voice the voice of God. For many years—let me say it with all gratitude and reverence—in this method of direct appeal to *facts*, after the manner of science, *i.e.* to the Christ of the Gospel and of the ages, to

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Christ in His revelation to all men and to myself, I have found the surest and swiftest way to make sure of the voice of God. Asking, "What would He do here? What would He say, and *how* would He say it?" the path of duty has been discovered, and the help of God enjoyed.

"We have explained something," says an acute writer, "when we have been able to break it up into simpler constituents which are already familiar." Suppose we try to break up this truth of the final and sufficient authority of Christ into "its simpler constituents with which we are familiar," and express them in the terms of the market and of the street.

So doing we shall discover that righteousness is an unfailing test of the divine guidance. The voice that leads to it, whosoever is the speaker, is of God. He is the "Eternal Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." It is the one goal of His stupendous administration; the quickening spirit of His providence, and the final—if far off—issue of all His work. "He that is near Me is near fire," says God, so that if we are near the flames that search out and scorch wrong, destroy impurity in the individual and the race, and build up the habitations of holiness, we have an undeniable warrant to feel sure we are not far from God.

Utility narrowly considered may mislead us. Utility, save as it is seen in its infinite stretch upwards and onwards, embracing eternity as well as time, is often deceptive. The true workers for the abiding welfare of the world have been idea-led; have seen invisible things; not thought of immediate results; but gazing

on the face of Eternal Right with unashamed spirit and unblenched courage, have fought for God, and gained the victory.

Still, when the inward prompting, which we are investigating as to whether it is of our lower selves or of the Spirit, lifts us at once from a personal and limited good to a service for the State or for the race, and quickens an enthusiasm for humanity, we have in the very elevation and breadth of the good sought a valid witness that the monition is divine. God is love; love of righteousness, and, therefore, love of the whole welfare of the whole man, and of all men; and, therefore, the service of love, in a total and unreserved sacrifice of self for the spiritual and permanent welfare of mankind, is a proof of the leading of the spirit of the Christ of Calvary. God-led, assuredly, are the souls, of any age and name, who think and pray, suffer and work, day by day to supply others' needs. Of two voices, one summoning to a private personal advantage, and ending therein, and the other inviting to a larger and far-reaching good for men, it is easy to be sure that the latter is the sign of His chastening nearness and redeeming leadership.

A further and more palpable sign still is to hand — and it is by the accumulation of evidence that assurance grows. When the messenger calls us to crucifixion of the sinful, selfish, animal self—the self of death and sin—and obedience necessitates pain, struggle, and self-suppression, we may say "welcome" as to an angel of God. The new self, created after Christ Jesus, leaps with joy to the highest word of the King, finds loss a gain, grief a joy misunderstood, self-denial salvation, and death life; but the old self has to be

crucified with its affections and lusts; and if the voice within bids us take up our cross, and then nail ourselves to it, let us believe we are being led by the Spirit into the truth. "Get thee behind me, Satan," said Christ to Peter, "for thou savourest the things that be of men, and not the things that be of God." The voice of the apostle spoke for pleasure, for the avoidance of suffering and of death. It was the echo of Satan. The voice that directed to the Judgment Hall, Gethsemane, and Calvary was the voice of God.

Therefore, until Christ is formed within us in the slow processes of a perfecting experience, the absolute sovereign of our being, and His voice is the unhindered speech heard distinctly all through our life, we cannot act more wisely than assure ourselves of the voice of God by the most rigorous and severe use of the tests of eternal righteousness, the larger good of the world, and the spirit of loving self-sacrifice.

But, it will be said, all this refers to *conduct* rather than to knowledge; to behaviour more than to belief, and, therefore, while it may help Gideon it will avail little for the special difficulty in the case of the three good men of the city of Norwich.

That I admit, in part. "In part," I say, for I do not admit it wholly. Ideas and beliefs are themselves in unspeakable degrees the offspring of experience. As we observe and experiment we reason and conclude, form our faiths, and shape and reconstruct our conceptions of God and His Son; of the Church and the Word. Each day's real living puts our faith to the test; and in spite of ourselves, and our protests against all change, some of us are lifted by the Spirit of God

out of our mistakes and misconceptions, prejudices and falsehoods, into the unclouded realm of the true. We learn, or, speaking in the language of the schools, we reason, and by reasoning accurately and faultlessly on the manifold data supplied to us in our own life and the life of the world, we possess ourselves of a full assurance of understanding that nothing can shake.

Now it is in this "reasoning," so-called, that all the differences of opinion and divisions of faith spring up with distorting and alarming luxuriance. In experience we Christians are one. In practical subjection to righteousness, charity, and self-sacrifice, we agree. In adoration of the Eternal we join in one chorus of song. But in *opinions* we differ. There is not an idea of God that is not the subject of debate, not a fact in Christianity that has not been differently interpreted, not a doctrine of Scripture that has not been variously conceived. We differ about baptism and the Lord's Supper, ministers and deacons, worship and communion, the Bible and God; and all in the face of the explicit promises of Christ that the Spirit *teaches* all things and guides into all truth.

What, therefore, is to be done?

Remember these differences start into being just where they occur in science. Keep in the laboratory, stick to your retorts, and you may agree. We cannot quarrel over the proposition that fire burns. But once begin to frame your theories of light, of the nature of atoms, of the movement of a glacier, and you open the door to differences and disputations not less extended than those which occur to theologians.

Recall the notorious fact that it is in "reasoning" that hereditary bias, temperament, education, fashion,

and social environment operate with such disastrous energy, warping and twisting our judgment so unconsciously and abidingly that it is said to require a whole generation to eliminate a solitary wide-spread error.

Next, note that the promise of Christ is to *teach* all things by the Spirit. The date when the lesson will be learnt is not fixed; and the eye should not be so exclusively fixed on the universal range of knowledge covered by the Inward Teacher as to shut out of view the nature of the process by which the truth is learnt. Men talk as though the Spirit uniformly sent truth to men in all-revealing flashes of light, and not by a slow educating process, educing and directing the exercise of the powers of the pupil on the facts and truths of revelation and life, and aiding him, so far as he is capable of receiving help, in the apprehension of divine ideas. "The Spirit *teaches*." The laws of learning are all in force. The supreme knowledge does not come abruptly, casually, "with observation." It may appear like an unannounced invasion to our limited vision; but a fuller investigation discloses the far-off preparatory processes of the ever-renewing Spirit.

> "Let no man think that sudden, in a minute
> All is accomplished and the work is done,
> Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it,
> Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun."

Only slowly and after much painstaking do we learn the full meaning of His communications, and are enriched with His boundless stores.*

Nor is a contrary idea given in the cheering promise, He shall guide you into *all* the truth. He

* Signs of the direction in which the problem of the three men of the city of Norwich will be solved are not wanting. See "Review of the Churches," vol. iii. p. 156.

guides us *into* the truth. It is not that truth itself is given us, as you may give a book to a reader, or a loaf to an eater; but we ourselves are taken where the truth is—led as into the truth-realm, in sight of its collective and manifold contents, all radiant with the light the truth itself sheds; and, therefore, it is manifest we may know little or much, perfectly or imperfectly, according to the wisdom and zeal with which we follow the leadings and accept the inspirations of the one gracious Guide.*

The spirit of inductive science led men into the truth of Nature, and yet for generations men lived in that realm without knowing much of the immense forces of iron and coal at their feet, of the electricity and light within their grasp; and even now the most able and accomplished students of physical science declare they know little compared with what is to be discovered; but their incalculable gain is this—they are in the right attitude, see facts in the right light, work by the right method, and though Nature adds not one cubit to her stature nor one inch to the area of her domain, yet their knowledge of her ways and wealth is enlarged from year to year, and fresh applications are regularly made of her ample powers. So it is with us; we are led into the very heart of the realm of truth, and though we do not know all things, and differ about many, yet we are in the right place, with our face set towards Christ Jesus, the "Light of Life," the "Light of Immortality," the "Light of the World," and the "Light of God"; and as we work by right methods and are filled with His Spirit, we shall in His light yet see eye to eye on God and man,

* Cf. "Dawn of Manhood," 3rd edit. p. 105 *et seq.*

life and destiny, on the creation and the Church, on duty and destiny.

How, then, as learners in the school of the Spirit, may we so conduct our "reasoning" that we may have a well-based conviction we have the mind of Christ, and are echoes of the voice of God?

By interpreting all past revelation truly, or, let me say, scientifically, *i.e.* so as to leave nothing in its whole contents unexpressed; nothing uttered so as to be over-weighted and borne into falsehood by want of proportion; nothing said to be of the revelation which is not actually in it. The Spirit brings to remembrance what the Christ has said; for that is the key to what He is now saying. Get sure of the significance of the first, and you will be nearer to the meaning of the second. Though the moralities of the Old Testament are surpassed in the ethical teaching and faultless example of the New; and the morning dawn of truth is not as the mid-day, yet the well-trained heart hears the voice of God in the Psalms, and reads the will of the Eternal in the prophets, and knows that the old writing is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. And since the Newer Scripture contains the full portraiture of Him on whom the Spirit in His totality descended and abode, it carries us to the fulness of the Godhead, the final, absolute test of the movements of the Divine Spirit in our age.* He, then, who has striven to the uttermost

* "The Gospel has not put the Old Testament aside, it has incorporated into itself the revelation which went before it. It avails itself of the Old Testament, as a great gift to Christian as well as to

to discover and apply sound scientific rules for the interpretation of Scripture, will obtain an assurance as to his personal beliefs that will give comfort to his spirit, beauty to his character, and power to his life.

Immense accessions of strength will also come to our convictions if we take care to shape them by the guidance of the verdicts of the growing consciousness of regenerate and Christianized humanity. This is the dispensation of the Spirit; and the Spirit not only convinces the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, but leads the Christian brotherhood to clearer conceptions of the truth of God. The sin of slavery, for example, has ceased to be a disputable proposition; and the advent of children to the privileges of the Christian life is now universally welcomed. If it is given to some men to read the universal Christian consciousness, to detect truths as they emerge into the fuller light of the Christian mind, they will obtain therefrom an invincible assurance that they speak the mind of the Spirit.*

The greater care we take to free the mind from selfish bias, personal prejudgment, hardness, want of spiritual sympathy, the more likely shall we be to see

Jew. It does not dispense with it, but it dispenses it."—Dr. J. H. Newman, "Sermons on Subjects of the Day," p. 205.

* Cf. J. D. Morell's "Philosophical Tendencies of the Age," p. 176 *et seq.* Speaking of the steady, ceaseless growth of theological truth to ever higher and nobler forms, Cardinal Newman says:—"Wonderful it is to see with what effort, hesitation, suspense, interruption —with how many swayings to the right and to the left—with how many reverses, yet with what certainty of advance, with what precision in its march, and with what ultimate completeness it has been evolved, till the whole truth, 'self-balanced on its centre hung,' part answering to part, one absolute, integral, indissoluble, while the whole lasts! Wonderful to see how heresy has but thrown this idea into fresh forms, and drawn out from it further developments with an exuberance which exceeded all questionings, and a harmony which baffled all criticism."—"University Sermons," p. 307.

the truth. "The integrity of the upright shall guide them." A holy purpose keeps an open road between the soul and the Spirit. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." A soul surrendered wholly to God is the nearest approach to a transparent medium for the truth this earth affords.*

Add to these precautions and qualifications strenuous toil in the use of universally vindicated modes of "reasoning," and daily communion with, and dependence upon God, and though we may never wholly escape mistake and error, yet we shall enjoy a growth in capability to read the will of God which will register itself at once in the radiant holiness of our lives, and in the satisfying and strengthening convictions of our minds that we are possessed of the thoughts and sure of the voice of the Spirit of God. †

* "In general, all fatal false reasoning proceeds from people having some one false notion in their hearts, with which they are resolved that their reasoning *shall* comply."—"Eagle's Nest," p. 13; Ruskin.

"Great truths are dearly bought. The common truth,
Such as men give and take from day to day,
Comes in the common walks of easy life,
Blown by the careless wind across our way.

"Great truths are dearly won, not formed by chance,
Not wafted on the breath of summer dream;
But grasped in the great struggle of the soul,
Hard buffeting with adverse wind and stream.

"Not in the general mart, 'mid corn and wine;
Not in the merchandise of golden gems;
Not in the world's gay halls of midnight mirth,
Nor 'mid the blaze of regal diadems;

"But in the day of conflict, fear and grief,
When the strong hand of God, put forth in might,
Ploughs up the subsoil of the stagnant heart,
And brings the imprisoned truth-seed to the light."

† Valuable hints for this work will be found in "Criteria of Diverse Kinds of Truth, as opposed to Agnosticism: being a Treatise on Applied Logic," by James McCosh, D.D., LL.D.

But supposing "reasoning" fails to assure us; and even experience is so beset with contradiction and invested with confusion, that it will not support us; yet we can fall back into our last stronghold, and in self-evident, necessary, and universal truths stand on the solid rock which sustains our convictions and guarantees our faith; we can rest on that "idea of God" which is, according to Professor Edward Caird, "the ultimate presupposition of our consciousness." For it is no mere pious metaphor: but a simple fact to say that all our life is a journey from God to God, that in Him we live and move and have our being.* Not more sure are we of space and time than of God. They are necessary; so is He. But a dumb God is no God, and a God who does not *continue* to speak, to manifest Himself to the man He has made and dowered with such fateful gifts, cannot be God. He cannot leave us, or forsake us. We are His workmanship; He must care for it, and for us; and what comes of it and of us here and by-and-by. He will not leave man to perish—

> "Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
> Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,
> Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,
>
> Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
> Who battled for the True, the Just."

Answer and help must come; "the voice to soothe and bless" must be heard "from behind the veil."

Nor is this all; but we may still say with George MacDonald—

> "Not on the clasp of consciousness—on Thee my life depends,
> Not what I think, but what Thou art, makes sure."

* "Evolution of Religion," vol. i. 64, 166.

"For when flesh and heart fail, God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."*

* "*Eulalia.* Ay God remains
Even did men forsake you.
Chiappino. Oh! not so
Were 't not for God; I mean, what hope of truth
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man?
* * * * *
I trust in God—the Right shall be the Right,
And other than the Wrong while He endures.
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's."

BROWNING: *A Soul's Tragedy*, Works vol. iii., 260, 270.

GOD REVEALED IN CHRIST.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."—1 CORINTHIANS ii. 16.

THAT final sentence is a note of triumph. It rings with the clear resonance of "the accent of conviction"; but a conviction that has become a fount of satisfaction and a spring of delight. Paul speaks with the full assurance of understanding, with the positiveness of tested experience and verified knowledge; with the gladness of a pilgrim who, after a long and anxious quest, has found the Holy Grail. He, with his fellow-believers at Corinth, has walked in the valley of the shadow of doubt, and gazed with awe into the unexplorable distances of the divine mystery; but now he and they stand, firm-footed and sure-hearted, on the solid rock of Christian fact; together they have found the supreme certainty for life; and for religion, which is the beating heart of life.

True, they do not *know* the mind of the Eternal —the unfathomable contents of divine wisdom and knowledge! Who ever did? Who of mortals ever could? True, they shrink with awe from the task of suggesting instruction to God, as to His purposes and ways. "It is too high for them." But, over against these confessed limitations this undeniable fact is set: *we have the mind of Christ.* They pos-

sess its ideas and inspirations, passions and energies, its light and power, its serenity and victory; and that one possession makes up for whatever else is absent—gives light where all else is dark; totally compensates for invincible ignorance concerning God Himself, in His essence and infinity, and supplies available and adequate help for a life of intellectual repose, practical wisdom, flawless goodness, and increasing usefulness. As the light of the midday sun illumines the whole sphere of our working life, though it leaves unrevealed to us far-off regions of space, so men indwelt by the "mind of Christ," whilst confessing that many things are hidden from their ken, have all they need for a life full of enthusiasm for the greatest things, and thoroughly true to the smallest; strenuous in the service of humanity, but rich in gentleness and peace; stern and even flamingly heroic in defence of right and justice, whilst bathed in the meekness, lowliness, and self-sacrifice which are the truest signs of a present God. If, then, the spirit, overwhelmed by the sight of the abysmal darkness that confronts it in its search for God exclaims: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him?" the man who is in Christ and has become a new intellectual and moral creation by His redemptive advent, answers, as one who has found the all-purchasing pearl of great price, "But we have the mind of Christ."

Weigh these two sayings of Paul. Trace his question to its sources, and note the echoes of it in our own day. Test by the severest criteria the supreme and all-satisfying certitude to which he gives utterance, cherishing the hope that some light may fall on our path as we seek accurately to interpret and faithfully

to use that precious, mysterious, and often exacting gift of the Father to each of us—our personal human life.

First, Paul's Agnosticism. It is a citation from the Old Testament which gives the Apostle his point of departure at this stage of his reasoning concerning the way in which sense-bound and sinful men enter into the revelations of God. He is a disciple of the prophets, sits at their feet, and shares their overwhelming sense of the majesty and mystery of God. To him, as to them, God is the one reality, the eternally living, immanent in all life, but unexhausted by the whole; manifested in the smallest movements of the universe, but not fully disclosed by the greatest; inwrought in all our experiences, even in that of "the fool who says in his heart there is no God," and yet not "searched out," or known by the holiest and most clear-sighted of the seers. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." "Matter" is the marvellous, manifold, and many-coloured machine His forces move; the great organ on which He discourses sweetest music; the beautiful garment He weaves and wears; Himself in all and through all, yet over and beyond all, compelling the adoring soul to say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!"

But the confession of ignorance concerning God was not always made in this reverent mood, nor always used to stir the quickening and ennobling sense of awe for the Infinite. Though all prophets are agnostics, all agnostics are not prophets. A man need not be much of a man to be an agnostic. He *may*

be only a fribble, vacuous, vain of his common sense, like Zophar the Naamathite, who tips the arrows he shoots into the bruised spirit of Job with the poison of agnosticism, and taunts the baffled but heroic sufferer as "he breasts the blows of circumstance and grapples with his evil star" because of his intolerable blindness, saying with rending sarcasm :—

> "Canst *thou* by searching find out God?
> Canst *thou* find out the Almighty unto perfection?
> It is high as Heaven; what canst *thou* do?
> Deeper than Sheol; what canst *thou* know?
> The measure thereof is longer than the earth
> And broader than the sea."

Now, when Paul accepts and endorses the limitations of our knowledge of God he quotes Isaiah, and not Zophar; and his mood (the mood is nearly everything) is that of a worshipping prophet, and not that of the vitriolic debater. As to Moses, the very ground on which he stood was holy, and the "great sight" of the burning but unconsumed bush filled him with unspeakable awe; so Paul, as he enters the "Unseen Holy," welcomes the veil that hides from sight the absolute and infinite Jehovah, and bows himself in adoring and loving praise.

That, too, was the uniform temper of the early Church. Justin Martyr asks, "Can a man know God as he can know arithmetic or astronomy?" and answers, "Assuredly not!" Clement of Alexandria says the process of theology, with regard to its doctrine of God, is negative and agnostic, setting forth what God is not, rather than what He is. Tertullian confesses the unsearchable nature of the Great Being, though he feels that he is brought into living relation with "the human God, who had revealed Himself in

His Son." Augustine affirms that the power adequately to name God is not attainable by men in this earthly life.

And now, in this, as in other respects, we Christian men are being taken back under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, and by the agency of philosophy and science, to the attitude and mood of the Christians of an earlier time. Paul's inquiry, "Who knows God?" is echoed all around us in these later days, and for the most part in Paul's temper. Thirty years ago men had forgotten their real limitations—and we cannot forget any truth long without grave loss. We imagined we could adequately name God, describe His "eternal counsels," analyze His nature into its component parts, map out His procedure, forecast His choices, and determine the day and hour of His appearings; we thought we could define Him as we define a cray-fish, or a piece of chalk, or a chemical compound, and we used a series of high-sounding words of Latin origin, such as omnipotent, omniscient, and the like, as though we were in possession of all knowledge; but the sustained effort to obtain exact and verifiable knowledge in every department of life has conducted us, in questions theological, to the bracing height occupied by the Hebrew seers, and filled us with something of the Hebrew awe. The change has come to us as a shock. Some have felt it so acutely as to be driven to despair; and others have been led foolishly to discount religion because God cannot be fully known; and still others, not knowing their real friends, have sneered at philosophy, science, and criticism, for the temporary disturbance they have caused; but we all feel that God *is*, though *what* He is

we cannot even guess. His being is the mighty yet undemonstrable implication of Nature and of man—an implication more potent than all our logic, victorious after a thousand defeats, and rising into life after a thousand deaths. Nature in its totality is not all. "Force," says science, "is everlasting." Philosophy adds, it is intelligent; for what it takes mind to explore it must take mind to create. History adds, that "force" is righteous as well as intelligent and eternal; and, therefore, it is personal and related to conscience. There we stop. Not an inch further can we proceed! Science and philosophy leave us and questions come in troops, such as the following: "Is there a character I may and ought to form for myself; if so, what is it? What is the feeling of the God of righteousness towards sin, and how does He deal with it? How can man be just with God? May the sinful draw near to the All-Holy? If a sinning soul speaks, will God be silent? He is eternal; will He make me a partaker of His endless life? This human race, whither is it tending?" Verily, our being is a mystery, our speech a question, our life an enigma, and our destiny an abyss. We ask, in eager hopefulness, who hath known the mind of the Lord? who can and will reveal that mind to us? If only we knew Him, we should know all!

Next, Paul's Certitude. Now over against that ignorance and those irrepressible questions, Paul sets (1) his claim to the actual and conscious possession of the mind that was in Christ Jesus; (2) the capital and crowning fact that this possession compensated amply for all ignorance of God; did for them what a full knowledge of the mind of God would do, if they had

it—gave the light, and the wisdom, the peace, power, and victory men needed to live the best life and render the best service to the world.

Is that double claim valid? Can it be vindicated in the courts of reason and history?

1. It is notorious that Paul had "the mind of Christ," was so filled with His ethical and redemptive ideas, pervaded with His self-suppressing, world-saving spirit, ruled by His passion, and constrained by His love, that his own personality was swallowed up in the greater personality of the indwelling Christ. "I live," he exclaims, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Jesus, as He was historically manifested, was re-incarnate in Paul. No one soul can reveal Him. He is so great, so manifold, so unique a personality; but assuredly the Gospels have no more luminous commentary upon Jesus Christ our Lord than Paul's life. Christ has no fuller individual revelation than Paul's whole career. Nay, so completely has the "mind," the "spirit" of Christ filled Paul, that for some men he has entered into competition with Christ Himself; and criticism has in several signal instances made the unpardonable mistake of crediting victories and successes to Paul's genius and skill that he disdained with ineffable scorn to treat as his own, and traced from first to last, and in the most self-excluding way, entirely to the power and grace of Jesus, his Saviour, Leader, and King.

Moreover, what is undeniable fact in the case of the Apostle Paul, is true in a scarcely less arresting degree of the Christians whom he brackets with himself in the assertion, "We have the mind of Christ." To them Christ is all and in all; the Alpha and Omega,

the first and the last; and "to Him as God" they sing hymns of praise with wholly surrendered soul. They are "the body" of which He is head, the organism of which He is the directing and controlling mind. He is the inspiration of their heroisms, the source of their patience, the rock of their steadfastness, the goal of their endeavours, and the fountain of their life. He is the light that shines on every page of their literature and flashes forth from all their speech; the love that throbs in their compassions and fires their philanthropic zeal; the holiness that creates and blends with miraculous beauty their strenuous purity and their overflowing pity for a lost world.

Nor is this all. These men experience a new access of energy. Christ is not only their sanctification and righteousness; He is their redemption from weakness. A new power floods and leads the world. With a courage nothing can daunt, and a concentrated persistence nothing can check, they make an end to the tyranny of circumstance, batter down the might of majorities, and demonstrate the sovereignty of souls; so that it is no more than sober fact which recites that in all things they are more than conquerors through the love of Christ. The mightiest foe can do nothing but give in, sooner or later, to men who confront their bitterest opponents with the calm arithmetic, which says: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time"—and only the most thoroughly imaginative sympathy can estimate the pathos and tragedy those words express—"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us at the manifestation of the sons of God."

Complete this statement by noting that the Christian thought, like the Christian conscience, is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He who is the Friend of the heart is also the Lord of the intellect. The Christ of the will shapes and determines the thinking. His creative ideas become the norm and law of all thought concerning God, sin, sorrow, things present, things to come, destiny, the universe. Life is brought to the light of his revelation. Death is abolished as death, and only appears as a momentary halt in the progress to immortal existence. The universe is interpreted in terms of the Divine Fatherhood, and all the experiences of souls, sad or joyous, are recast in His infallible moulds. They have the mind of Christ.

2. But I can imagine a listener ready to say, "Conclusive and undeniable as those facts are, I cannot think it possible to prove that the consciousness of sharing in the ideas, qualities, attributes, energy, and character of Christ accomplishes for us what we can imagine would be secured to us by a full knowledge of the mind of God; and that, in short, if God were fully known, and our questions about Him completely answered, that would do no more for us than is done by and through the man Jesus Christ."

(*a*) But note, first, it is not mere knowledge about Christ, opinions as to His person, descent, relation to nature, man, and society, that is said to exercise this satisfying and victorious influence. It is not "we know," but "we have the mind of Christ." The claim is made for experience, for the conscious identification of the soul with Christ and Christ with the soul; for the

sympathy, trust, admiration, love, hope, that open the whole man, intellect, conscience, heart, and will, to the gracious kingship of the Redeemer. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, sense and intellect have not won such victories; but God gives them to us by His Spirit. Men hear a truth for a quarter of a century and never *have* it. It fails to win their homage or redeem their life. It never has or holds them. We hear of books and know their drift, their story or plot, or reasoning; but we do not take them into our souls as we take air into our lungs, and bread into our muscles and nerves, and, therefore, we *have* not the books; they are on our shelves and their words may pass over our lips; but they are not in us, creating ideas, shaping thought, moulding life and character. The Samaritans knew something of the Saviour as they listened to the speech of the woman whose spirit He had quickened with His gracious revelation; but it was after they had felt the magnetism of His presence, and been infected with His contagious love, that they exclaimed, addressing the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Another fact must be remembered. For it is noteworthy that it is a collective and organic, and not an individual experience, which is set over against our ignorance of the Eternal as the firm and all-sufficient ground for an unbroken confidence in God. "*We* have the mind of Christ." It is not an isolated testimony of a lonely ascetic, but the witness of a living, continuous, and historic brotherhood. The inward processes of thought and feeling of solitary and unrelated persons

must be interesting, but only evidential in a very inferior degree. Paul stands on the historical experiences of widely distributed societies—visible, not hidden in a corner: tangible, stable, accumulated, sifted, verified and verifiable. Goethe says "the assent of one man confirmed him infinitely in his opinion." The individual may with reason doubt the accuracy of his vision, and subject it to rigorous examination; but we must have strong grounds for resisting or even questioning the concordant testimony of all the citizens of London. We may cherish misgiving concerning the verdicts that stand alone, and treat them as the dreams of vain or misguided individuals, but the public experience of a race spread over centuries is a massing of evidence that comes with almost overwhelming force. If Paul stood alone in his serene trust in an unseen and unknown God, faithful to the revelation of Him in his experiences of Christ, as though they completely discovered Him, we should be under the obligation of carefully testing the witness of so original and marvellous a personality; but when we add to the Apostle Paul, the entire Christian host of all the centuries in its continuous, though too often clouded and mist-enswathed possession of the mind of Christ, we have a stronghold of evidence for faith in Christ as an effective working equivalent for a full knowledge of God that ought to be more irresistible than that which secures our confidence in the invariability of what we call the laws of Nature.

As a matter of fact, so it is, and has been. The all-availing support of faith in God has been our experience of Christ. The tower that cannot be stormed by the battering-ram of logic, nor beaten down by the

war-engines of false philosophy, is built up out of the convictions and feelings, sorrows and joys, hopes and victories, of the human heart. No ladders can scale its walls, nor can any merely intellectual sappers and miners overturn them. The strongest outposts of reason may be taken, and the brilliant and beautiful defences of imagination may be shattered to their foundations, but the deep and abiding experiences of sin-defying men are a strong bulwark of teaching and conviction into which the righteous run and are safe. Our consciousness of Christ and His salvation is unassailable.

> "If e'er, when faith has fallen asleep,
> We hear a voice, 'Believe no more,'
> And hear an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbles in a godless deep—
> A warmth within the breast will melt
> The freezing reason's colder part;
> And, like a man in wrath, the heart
> Stands up and answers, 'I have felt.'"

Such heart-felt experience of truth has been the dwelling-place of all generations of perplexed and doubt-beset men, the secure and happy home of the wise and good in all ages of the world. The first Bible was not a book, but an experience. Long before the first page of Scripture was penned men walked with God, and rejoicingly communed with Him; and then read, in the various records of their heart's experience, a revelation of light and power, profitable for doctrine and instruction, and for discipline in righteousness. The prophets were *seers*—men who had an intuition of God and His truth, looked into His loving eyes, and heard with open ear His message. Few of the martyrs of the New Testament Church were logicians, though young Stephen, the first of the conquer-

ing army, was as invincible in reasoning as he was in faith The early Confessors did not rest their belief on piles of "evidence." They knew whom they believed, and moved with the unflinching certainty of personal knowledge.

And at the present day, where one Christian bows the knee to Christ as Lord because his reason is unconquerably convinced, and his knowledge of Christ's nature without defect, thousands open wide their hearts to Him because He, and He only, has given them victory over sin and self, enlargement of heart and hope, strong pulses of new and heavenly energy, brighter skies for the life that now is and more luminous prospects for that which is to come. Myriads of believers are incapable of analyzing and stating the grounds of their faith; but they are quite as incapable of surrendering their confidence. They have not creeds, but they have love, and "courage never to submit or yield, and what else is not to be overcome." To them it is enough that they have seen and tasted and handled the Word of Life, and can continue in the satisfying occupation as long as they live. All their logic is summed up in the brief but pregnant phrases, "I have felt" and "I do feel Christ's power and grace remaking me." With such convictions they defy a host of sceptics, argue they never so cleverly; and armies of scoffers, though they let loose whirlwinds of scorn. "I have felt" is a sword that never breaks, though it may not always cut, and will disperse whole regiments of doubts, though it may not kill a single soldier. "I have felt" is a part of their very selves, as well as a summary of the products of their experience, and is more inseparable from their being than

eye, or hand, or soul. "I have felt" is a well-spring of hope in the day of dejection, a clarion call to attack after defeat, a sun that streaks the darkest cloud with light, a witness for enduring righteousness amid the world's falsehoods and deceptions, a part of that divine nature of which we have been made partakers, incorporated with our spiritual being.

(*b*) Such a working basis of faith in the living and loving God being indefeasibly secured to us by Christ Jesus, is it demonstrable that that same mind supplies us with the highest *ideal of character* possible to sinful men, and obligatory upon us in our present impoverished and fettered condition?

So far as human experience has gone, nothing more absolutely God-like or divine than the image of Jesus has yet been seen amongst men. Fairer He is than all the fair that fill the heavenly or earthly train. By an almost unbroken confession of witnesses His character is unsurpassed and unsurpassable. In its harmonious blending of qualities, in its depth and inwardness, serenity and passion, meekness and opulence of power, purity and pity, divinity and humanness, it is so perfect that it is not unreasonable to believe that whatever time or eternity may disclose concerning God, there is nothing more essentially divine in God, or can be shown of God, than is given us in Christ Jesus. The Nazarene has fixed for evermore the conception of God. Know Him fully, and you know that. Let Him dwell in you richly, and you move towards His thought of God, and your ideal of life rises and enlarges till it embraces all self-deny-

ing work, and inspires all pure worship. The advancing ages gravitate towards His complete idea of God. As aforetime, so now His disciples have to report of Him, "All men seek for Thee," and those who find Him, or are found of Him, and possess Him, and stay with Him, advancing not in fragments, but as wholes, come at length to express as their sustaining faith in their quest for the ideal, "The Word was God, and became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. And of His fulness we all received, and grace for grace."

(*c*) But, says the soul tortured with the recollection of repeated defeats, and paralyzed by a long series of fruitless efforts, if we were able to know God as we wish, would there not be such an advent of power as would change the work of life from an irritation to a magnet, from a burden and a cross to a crown and glory? Like Job, in one of his spasms of fear, we say, "Would He if He were to appear contend against me in the greatness of His strength?" and we answer with his outleap of faith, "Nay, but He would give heed unto us;" we are assured that He would not only hear our plaint, but fill us with such power that we should be able to say, "We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us."

What baffles us is *sin* at the very centre of our conscious life! The fight we have with it makes life what it is—a painful, bruised, bitter, and tormenting experience, often a feverish gallop after self-forgetfulness. The mind is warped by it, judgment biassed,

affection depraved, sentiment poisoned, ideals battered to dust. But Christ comes expressly to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness. That fixes His name and place—His name, for He is called Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins; His place, for He is at the heart of the saddest human experience.

As the gold leaf of the electrometer flutters at the passing of a thundercloud, so the soul alive to sin recognizes in Christ the unique personality who can deal with it. Wearied of the strife against it, yearning for forgiveness and victory, he rejoices to hear the emancipating message, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace; sin no more." It is enough. The voice is divine. Christ has descended to the lowest levels of human need, and the glad freed man cannot repress the worship that breaks out of the full heart, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God."

Sorrow is not less real than sin as a part of our experience, and Christ's cure for it is no less certain and blessed. The balmy breath of June is not blowing all the year. Chill frosts steal over the gardens of our delight, and nip the beauty of our loveliest flowers. Our hearts are often troubled because God seems as unreal as a thin gossamer cloud drifting hither and thither in the limitless sky. Heaven collapses into a passing wish, life becomes a wearisome failure, and death and the future are peopled with appalling terrors. But the voice of the Son of Man soothes us. In Him we see the Father, and learn to rejoice in the Father's home and love, to look on the cross as Heaven's

ware-mark chased on every vessel of mercy, and death as God's swift-footed steed sent to fetch His children home; and as, under this gracious tuition, we take in exchange the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, we are ready to chant the worshipful strains of the ancient hymn, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ."

But in *character* Christ Jesus writes His name "Emmanuel" more legibly than in aught else. Nothing is more precious than righteous character. It makes, remakes, and perfects the world. This ennobles, gives tone, magnetizes, and conquers. Genius is clever and brilliant, but morals are supreme. "The Greeks," says Emerson, "had genius, but Roman character conquered them." The Romans had legislative and administrative power, but Christian character conquered them. Character is victory—victory over the world and over self; it is a sense of sufficiency of power; it is unconquerable energy, exhaustless hope; it is greatness; nothing is like it, or equal to it in beauty, or force, or excellence; and the ages prove, and the hearts of the good declare, there is no builder of character like Christ. He gives a man full possession of himself, delivers up to him the key to every chamber of his being; is an unfailing spring of energy and hopefulness, of joy and of service, and so divinely does He write out His divineness day by day, verse by verse, and chapter after chapter, in the book of our Christian consciousness, that to doubt His Deity would be to doubt our own being, and misread our every-day experience.

To men with these and kindred experiences this

test is final. They will not despise others, but this carries them through the crises of life. It is a sure anchor in the stormiest sea. It is a rock that cannot be moved. We come to the Father, from whom Christ Himself came. He is our Mediator. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. No man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. Through Him we have freedom of access, not to an abstraction, but to God; not to God as the timeless, eternal Jehovah, but to the Father who has done something for His sons, and who is doing something for them still; who administers the world for their salvation, who has spoken to us, come to us, set Himself among sinful men, reconciling us, delighting to forgive, ready to save; who is the God of grace, the God of love, Father of all men, and not willing that any should perish. That historical manifestation *was* that we may know what He *is*. The witness and action of God, embodied in the Gospel, is the sign and revelation of what God is to us now. God so loved the world that He *gave* His Son, and to-day He so loves us as to give us His "mind," even the same mind that was in Christ, by His Spirit, that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and He is now in us, in our history, in our fellows, in His Church, in our spiritually opulent life, reconciling us to Himself, and, through Christ-filled men, reconciling all things to Himself.

We repeat the confession of Paul with Paul's joy.

We have Paul's agnosticism and Paul's certitude. We do not know God fully; we cannot; but we *have* the mind of Christ, and that, together with God's revelations to us in the Bible and *in life*, supplies the data, principles, and key for a true, living, and progressive theology, the "strong consolation" for sorrowing man pressed by the "weary weight of all this unintelligible world," and the forces and inspirations for a life saintly in itself and rich in utilities for all the world.

It was when Philip reported to Christ that certain Greeks wished to see Him that He said, "Father, the hour is come. . . . . Glorify Thy name." The search for Christ is the glorification of God. God's glory is His manifestation to souls by the Saviour. Begin, then, the quest for God with Christ, the Christ of the Gospels, the Christ of history, Son of God, Son of Man, King of Israel, Lord of Souls. In that light you will see light. He is not a shadowy figure floating before the fancy, but a great historic reality; not a mere symbol of religious ideas, but a person whose "mind" thinks, speaks, lives and inspires in and by the pages of the New Testament. That "mind" makes and fills the Book. If not, whose is it? For what figure is there like it? Seek Him! Dwell with Him, reverently with a frank trust, a growing love, an open soul, a surrendered will. Mind knows mind. Love interprets love. We get the highest by the use of what is highest in us, by faith and imagination, by love and hope and deed. Dallinger does not work with the retort, but with a microscope. Faraday did not test love in the laboratory, but in the home and the Church. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." Christ

is the life—the divine life of man! Through Him we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. By Him we win the victory over self and sin, the world and the devil. Led of His Spirit we die to evil and to self, and live to God and man. Trained in His school we come to the truth of the living God, even the Father, redeeming and sanctifying men; and so obtain rest for the intellect, love for the heart, energy for the will, righteousness for the character, salvation for society, and God for all, in all, and over all.

THE GREAT FORTY YEARS.

"Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints."—JUDE, v. 3.

THE history of Christianity is the history of controversy. Our Master said, "I came to cast fire on the earth;" and here, as everywhere, He has kept His word. The fire has gone burning and cleansing on, consuming the falsehoods and partialisms of ages, and making more luminous the revelation of God in Christ, the divine Fire-bringer. Disputes with the Temple party at Jerusalem are the setting of the sublimest speech of the Son of the Highest concerning Himself and His relations to the souls of men. Judaising teachers, entangling the original "Welsh" Christians of Galatia with specious words, call out the clearest and most definitely marked statement of the "fundamental" Gospel. Philosophic debates at Colosse give rise to the awe-inspiring portraiture of the ineffable glory of "the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Peter and Jude make palpable the central position of the cross in our religion, when they denounce with scorching energy those who privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, and who is therefore their rightful Lord. John exposes the capital heresy of this and every age when he signalizes as deceivers, all those who refuse to ac-

knowledge "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," an actual man amongst common men; and so detach us from that teaching, abiding in which "we have *both* the Father and the Son." *

Nor is this all. Controversy has often expanded the sway of truth, freed souls, quickened missionary zeal, and purified the Church. Even the first friends of Christianity were never perfectly agreed as to its whole contents. Living men differ. It is the dead who agree. Poor shattered fragments that we are! Why! truth would have no chance at all on the earth if each man were nothing but the sibilant echo of his fellow. God sets men at different angles of the truth, so that one may see what others cannot, and, thereby, more of her virginal beauty and perennial loveliness be revealed to men. The four Gospels are four mirrors placed over against the Christ at different positions, and revealing different aspects of the one unique figure. They are not echoes, but voices: each living and distinct in tone and timbre, quality and message; but all speaking in perfect harmony, and contributing to the sweetness and fulness of the majestic music. Peter is not a plaster cast of the Apostle John. Paul does not always endorse Peter; he does us good, and the world too, by withstanding him to the face when he is to be blamed. Practical James does not copy the "Romans;" he writes his own letter in his own way, and differs with and completes Paul. The gospel of Pentecost is so heightened and broadened by its controversies with paganism and philosophy without the Church, and Judaism and Gnosticism within it, that

* Cf. Gospel of John vi., viii., x. Galatians i. 3, 4; ii. 3, 5, 20; iii. 13; vi. 14. Colossians i. 15, 23; ii 7, 8. 2 Peter ii. 1. Jude 3. 2 John 7, 8, 9.

the glowing sentences of the first day seem as if they were left in the rear by the marvellous utterances of the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians. Pluck the fruits of controversy from the New Testament tree, and you have not only stripped it of its most precious growths, but left the branches so bare that they cease to be a sheltering home for the wearied nations of the earth.

That first century is a sample. The Jews are not out of the arena before other combatants appear eager for the fray. Lucian of Samosata,* with his caustic satire, lofty scorn, and profane parody of Christian martyrdom; Celsus, as bitter and disdainful as he is able; Fronto, sardonic and satirical; Apollonius, with his formal philosophy and speculative genius; Porphyry, critical, penetrating, and damaging; these and their compeers used all the weapons of the armoury of attack on the religion of the cross—fierce rancour, pessimistic cynicism, coarse rationalism, and supercilious hauteur. It was a painful struggle. Men who loved truth and adored the Christ were forced to fight for the citadel of Christianity; and they fought long and courageously, leaving their mistakes for our warning, their zeal for our imitation, and their victories for our solace.

And whilst the battle raged without there was anything but peace at home. Theological debate was as rife in Antioch and Rome as political is in Liverpool

* It has been questioned whether Lucian was an opponent of Christianity. Kestner thinks him a secret Christian. Neander represents him as placing Christianity in the same class as the phenomena of fanaticism and jugglery. Gieseler describes Lucian as "only noting Christianity as one of the follies of the time." It can hardly be an injustice to place a man, who writes as though he were against all religion, in the category of opponents of Christianity.

and London. Men talked as freely about the relations of the Father and of the Son as we do about the union of hydrogen and oxygen in water. Romanists and Evangelicals have both tried to make out that the Christians of the early centuries were perfectly agreed as to the significance of the Christian revelation, and moved on the same lines of theological doctrine. It is a vain attempt. Historical study has shown the utter falseness of the position, and historical theology is becoming one of the most healing of the forces of Christian literature. Dr. Newman, in his remarkable book on "The Development of Christian Doctrine," "has attemped to lead contemporary Catholicism into this more liberal and scientific track by admitting without hesitation the variations of primitive theology." *

Indeed, nothing is more certain than that although our Christianity was born in stillness and cradled in obscurity, it developed its great strength by sustained combat with the Goliaths of paganism and philosophy, and by incessant efforts to clear itself from the crudities and exaggerations of its own expositors and defenders. The Kingdom came without observation; but it had not been here long when the clash of arms was heard; and the sword of controversy has not been sheathed from that day to this. God educates His Church, if I may say it, by the Socratic method. He forces us to face the questions that test us, and attack the problems that try our strength; and thereby brings the sleeping energies of His living words into wakeful and beneficent activity. The Sphinx is one of our best

* Pressensé: "Early Years of Christianity, Heresy, and Doctrine," p. 214. Cf. also pp. 209 and 210.

teachers. "Easy come, easy go," is true of knowledge as well as of money; and true of even more precious things—of faith and hope, self-mastery and inward calm, resolute will and character. Even He, the pattern for us all, learned obedience by the things He suffered; and we must go through much tribulation to the kingdoms of truth and service. God will not suffer us to get our best beliefs as we do our coats. He forces our unrealized creeds through the furnaces of criticism, and they come forth in us as soul-propelling convictions. Give men a ready-made faith, paid for by pen subscription, or lip affirmation, and it is on them, not in them; on them like a garment, not in them as a life. Give us a Bible about which two opinions are not possible, and we treat it as we do the multiplication table, use it for our grosser needs; but never think of it for the splendid hours of spiritual aspiration and redeeming service. Give us a book full of truths we can never master, and depths we can never fathom, and it is exactly like our human life, and part of it; and as we use it so we are built up in strong convictions and inspiring faiths. The effort educates. The pain cleanses. The overpowering sense of weakness flings us in glad and unhesitating trust on the omnipotent forces of the Spirit, and so we become stronger and stronger.

But whatever the immediate issues may be for us as individuals, it ought to encourage us, that the *controversies of Christendom are gravitating with accelerated energy around the Lord Jesus, the divine Redeemer and Ruler of men.* This is as undeniable as it is prophetic of final victory. The battles of religion are really

battles about Christ; about Christ's ideas and Christ's methods; for the sway of Christ's spirit in the whole of life, home and Church, nation and world; for the perpetual and universal incarnation of the passion and power of the cross on the floor of this broad earth; and in actual touch of sinning and suffering men. God is compelling us to answer all our questions in the terms of Jesus Christ. Our controversies on ethics and politics, ritual and theology, ecclesiastics and eschatology, are rooted in spiritual facts and ideas; and spiritual facts and ideas have their sublime ideal and infallible revelation in the Son of Man, the supreme creative personality of the religious life. We can settle no difficulties of that life without His help; we cannot even understand them. Without Him, the "service of man" is often a code of rules hung on a factory wall, to be evaded as soon as the foreman is out of sight. Without Him, our "culture" tends to become a cheap veneer with a fine polish; and our ethical idealism only an intellectual luxury. Without Him, business is a fight for pelf, politics a scramble for place, ritual a pleasant performance, a creed a coffin for a faith, and theology a death's head. The historian, Froude, bears witness that the "religion of the future is the problem of problems, that rises before us at the close of this waning century"; and adds, with great significance, "that, too, like all else, depends on the spiritual beliefs which are to rise out of the present confusion. Men will act well and wisely, or ill and foolishly, according to the form and force of their conceptions of duty." *

And we know, from ever accumulating evidence, that

* "The English in the West Indies; or the Bow of Ulysses," by J. A. Froude.

the perfectest conceptions of duty, and the highest inspirations to obedience to the Best, are in Him who is Godhood and manhood revealed to, and dwelling with, the sons of men. Hegel says: "The heritage a great man leaves the world is to *force* it to explain him." On that scale Christ is unmatched, and His legacy unparalleled, and this the hour in which, beyond all preceding times, He is forcing all men, in Churches and out of them, to take part in explaining His simple and unique relations to the whole life of mankind. Viewed in patches, and in our sadder moments, it may seem as if all men were rebelling against Christ, and would not have Him to reign over them. Looked at along narrow lines, it may appear as though scepticism and unbelief are conquering men of education; Mammon, men of business, and vacuity the remainder; ay, and examining the Churches, one might imagine that they are forgetting that they are not their own, but are bought with a price and under unescapable obligations to save other people, whether they themselves are saved or not: but when the age is beheld in its depth and inwardness, in its yearnings and hopes, in its substantial faith and quiet service, it is clear that Jesus Christ is going everywhere, that His teachings are being sown in all soils, His power is present to heal in the synagogues of debate, His pavilion is at the very centre of the world's life, and His disciplined hosts are marching, as of old, from strength to strength and from victory to victory. The contest is between Christ and the "world," and "He must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet."

That fact is light as well as solace. We must go

where Christ is, get at the very heart of His religion, and fight for it with all our wisdom and might. We must have "the old Gospel"—the Gospel of the Great Forty Years—the years from thirty to seventy in the first century, the sublime creative era in the history of mankind and in the annals of Christianity. If the spirit of Christ is bearing us on through all controversies, ourselves often not knowing it, towards Christ, we surely, who are His men, must reach Him, sit at His feet, and learn of Him who is meek and lowly in spirit. Then we must represent Him, interpret His heart, make His idea of God regnant in the life of man, His thoughts of sin a fire in the conscience, His message of forgiveness a medicine, His ideal of duty a law, and His salvation in its length and breadth a living, world-wide experience. The Gospel was given for that.

> "God uses us to help each other so,
> Lending our minds out."

Somebody has said ninety per cent. of modern wars originated in mistakes. Should I go far astray if I said ninety per cent. of the controversies of Christians started with misconceptions, thrived on confusion and bitterness, and became perpetual through the power of "vested interests"? The first requisite, then, is not to fight, but to be perfectly sure that we have, and therefore can fight for, "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," and not for that which somebody, who may not know any better than ourselves, has labelled and handed to the world as "the faith." We must fight for "the thing itself," not something like it, not something that may perhaps be it and is not, but for that which Jesus Christ put into

the custody of His disciples, and charged them to carry to all peoples on earth. Christ is God, and gives the thought of God. The thought of God makes or mars the man; corrupts and destroys him if it be false and bad; if it be true and good, builds him up in love and trust and hope and service for evermore. This is the "one thing needful." Before all things we must possess ourselves of the imperishable substance of the primitive Christian faith.

But how can we be sure of the original Christianity of the Great Forty Years?

Fortunately the inquiry is neither new nor unfamiliar. When Martin Luther arose from his knees on the holy staircase at St. John's Lateran in Rome, he was a new man. New men put new questions; and his new question broke the spell of the ages, and forced Europe to ask, with quickened interest and alluring hope, "What is Christianity?" "What is the faith that saves?" The question has not since slept for long, and is to-day more wakeful than ever. Accustomed to take their answer from the lips of the Pope and his representatives, men had sunk into a weakening content, and Europe into a deepening decay. The monk reformed their *method* of studying religion, lifted their horizon, quickened penitence, and changed their life. They looked to Rome; he turned their eyes to Jerusalem. They listened to "Councils" and "Fathers"; he bade them hear the living oracles of God. They lost conscience, character, and Christ through the priest; he urged them back to the Saviour, and they became new men in Him, "created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

That impact is still upon us, and we move forward by its unspent energy. "The greatest gift a hero leaves his age is to have been a hero;" but surely the next greatest is to have invented a new and fruitful method of work. Lord Bacon served the generations of men in many ways; but the inductive method of scientific study is his everlasting memorial. So modern Christianity has been enriched by the massive sense and contagious enthusiasm of Martin Luther in manifold forms; but most of all in his use and vindication of the best method of finding an answer to the question, "What is the substance of the Christianity of Jesus Christ?"

By a new experiment, a scientist obtains the confirmation of his first result, and thus vindicates his way of working; so a fresh application of the Lutheran method was given of God in the last century, which made its value indisputable. That century was one of spiritual darkness, decay, and death. It was the era of revolution; the incarnation of the spirit of denial. Everything was in debate; the foundations of life and thought were shaken out of course. Hume attacked knowledge; Voltaire assailed the Church; Rousseau carried fire and sword into the very citadel of society. The philosophers examined man and found no mind, as they had investigated the universe and found no God. Theology was reduced to criticism, and Christianity to acrid syllogisms.

Now, it is not given to one man to tell everything. Mill has shown that Bacon's method is insufficient to detect the most obscure and difficult laws of nature. But our God is not poor; His resources are infinite and His Spirit is never dumb. So in the fulness of

time He raised up that greatest of modern apostles, John Wesley, and that prince of Baptist theologians, Andrew Fuller. Wesley made Methodism by his thorough-going application of Luther's method; and Fuller introduced a change scarcely less fruitful by his treatment of theology. "That theology began the renewal of the English Churches; roused the collective life of the Baptists of several midland counties through their Associations; increased prayer, inflamed zeal, and inspired the modern missionary enthusiasm for humanity. Conscience, the stronghold of missions to the heathen, was rediscovered and rebuilt. Christians felt with Paul that they were "debtors" of men, and owed to the millions of Hindostan and China the "Gospel worthy of all acceptation." Faithful Samuel Pearce set it aflame in the fires of his seraphic devotion; Robert Hall made it luminous with his brilliant genius; John Foster set it four-square to the whole of man's ethical life; Sutcliffe, Ryland, and the immortal Carey put it to work for the salvation of India." *

Men have doubted for a long time whether the red flames seen in total eclipses of the sun belong to the sun or the moon. An eclipse is an experiment in Nature's vast laboratory. In an eclipse of 1888 a trained eye noticed that the flames *moved with the sun*, and were gradually covered and uncovered by the moon at successive instants. Nothing could be more conclusive. Doubt fled. The fact was established. So in the more interesting laboratory of human life, a religious experiment with changed conditions has been

* "Baptist Theology," *Contemporary Review*, April, 1888, Vol. 53, pp. 511, 512.

conducted through the last half century. A new and beneficent impulse came into play over fifty years ago, and is mightily operative still. Partly from physical science and its eternal insistence on the *fact*—first the fact, and always and everywhere the fact—and partly from the reaction against the unrealities and insincerities of the preceding age, there was born that intense and domineering love of fact which is the characteristic of our day. This, in the judgment of so high an authority on ecclesiastical history as Dr. Hatch, gave rise to the Oxford Tractarians in the third decade of this century. "The school which then arose was a reaction against a school of speculation, which constructed an elaborate and scholastic theology on the basis of an arbitrary exegesis. They re-asserted the principle that Christianity has had a past, and that it is not given to each succeeding generation to start afresh with new interpretations and a new superstructure. They appealed to Christian antiquity, and they applied themselves to its study." *

But their aim was polemical, and a polemical aim blinds and confuses; and the result is, that stopping in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, they have given Christianity to the world, not in the simple and natural attire of the first days, but robed in the gorgeous vestures and corrupted by the flagrant errors of the mediæval Church.

Add to those data the interesting circumstance that within the last few years the discovery of the "Teaching of the Twelve," the "Apology of Aristides," has pushed historical studies to the beginning of the second century, with vast advantage to a simpler

* *Oxford Review*, Feb. 8, 1888, p. 281.

conception of the Gospel and the Church, and you see that for our purposes as students of *method* our case is scientifically complete.* The conclusion is established with all the severity of scientifically obtained results. To get a living and real Christianity to-day, one that will work out the salvation of the individual and the race, we must find out what Christianity is; to know what it is we must see it in its original integrity. Christ Himself is its Expositor as well as its Creator—Christ in the New Testament, Christ in the Church of the first days. Luther made Europe anew by going back to Paul and Christ. The fact is typical. Every approximation to Christ leads to the simplicity that is in Christ. Stop short of Him, and in the degree of your distance you are exposed to the corruptions of a Romanistic conception of the Gospel and of the Church. The sole invariable antecedent of a Christianity serviceable in the highest degree to man and men is the actual Christianity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament; and the method that compels us to study those writings is the one that supplies the best answer to the questions, "What is the Christianity for to-day?" "What was the Christianity of Jesus Christ, the Christianity of the Great Forty Years?"

Get that method to work. Use it with exactness and thoroughness. Do not forget that, though the facts of original Christianity face us to-day as they have not faced any century except the first, yet they

* "The Church of the Sub-Apostolic Age: its Life, Worship, and Organization in the Light of the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." By James Heron, B.A. "The Apology of Aristides." By Professor Rendel Harris.

are often hard to interpret; though they look simple, they are complex; though few, yet they have far-reaching ramifications. But fling *theories* to the winds with the energy of science; eliminate all known chances of error; move with unsleeping alertness; omit nothing; add nothing; learn all; and we ought to establish a conclusion on which we can rest as on granite.

Take three cases.

(1.) Begin at the beginning, with the first utterance by man of the Christian faith, "the primordial germ" of the Christian creeds; and of which we have the guarantee that Christ Himself approved it, hailed its expression with rapturous joy, and directly and distinctly attributed it to the inspiration of the Father.

Listen to the first Christian confessor. He starts on the solid base of fact. "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "*Thou*"! the Man, loved and glad of love, the Friend of young men, the Reformer of the Jewish religion, the working-man Jesus.

"Thou art the Christ!" The outburst is alive with soul. It is a hymn of adoration even more than a statement of belief; throbs with the whole heart of Peter, and the impulsive energies of the Holy Ghost. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee!" Peter has not been to the Rabbis. He is not fresh from a theological debate. This creed is not of human origin, elaborated by reasoning, a scholastic proposition, the starved child of a pinched logic: it is the actual gift and the veritable inspiration of the Father.

Fathom its meanings. Thou art the Christ; the anointed of Jehovah; the key to all human

struggle; the ideal of all aspiration; the authentic interpretation of the past; the supreme satisfaction for the coming ages. Peter is the typical—the most typical man of a typically religious people. He has been brought by Christ's training to the summit of the Hebrew race, and is the qualified representative of the Hebrew prophets. The highest man has the largest constituency, the widest representation; hence the new-born Peter gives utterance to the newly experienced joy of humanity in the fulfilment of the hope of the world. Humanity has its Christ, and therefore history is not a chaos, but an order; not a chapter of accidents, but a veritable progress; not a confusion, but a sure, if slow, evolution in His divine Person and work, of the divine idea of Redemption.

Not only so, this primary creed is one of those luminous soul-sentences that flash light on the universe of thought. In compactest form it packs the fulness of evangelic ideas. "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!*" Mind of His mind, thought of His thought, heart of His heart, will of His will; one with Him who lives in every movement, is in contact with every soul; the living Lord and Ruler of the eternities; the beloved *Son* of the *Father;* the perfectest manifestation of Deity; God coming out of His eternal invisibility to get hold of us and save us; uttering His highest speech to our heart; responding to the pathetic hunger of souls for His "bread of life"; demonstrating that Deity is not cold, dead law, but warm, glowing life; not an impassive majesty, a distant spectator, but an ineffable Father-heart, suffering to redeem, and redeeming to reign in love and

righteousness for evermore. There you have it—*facts, forces, ideas;* not less, not more; not facts only, and so nothing but a retrospect, a page of history; not ideas only, and so nothing but an effort of intellect; but ideas, facts, and forces—the forces which are above, and come to us men bringing an everlasting salvation. Ah, brothers! get that creed as Peter got it; let it be in you by the power of the Father, and come forth in adoring trust and worshipping love; and whoever may condemn you, one voice will be heard in the silence of your spirit, saying, "Blessed art thou: flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in Heaven."

(2.) At the close of our Lord's ministry, another original and irresistible expression of the primitive Christian faith meets us. It follows the Crucifixion, and has been cleansed and energized in the fires of agonizing doubt. More concise than Peter's, it is not more comprehensive. Like Peter's, it is not an echo, but a voice; not a recitation, but a conviction; not an act of memory, but the articulate breath of a living soul; and, therefore, it is immediately appreciated and expressly approved by Jesus Christ—endorsed as to its tremendous contents, but guarded and protected against possible misuse by cautionary and enlarging words. There is, however, this difference: Peter's confession places us at the birth of a creed; the exclamation of Thomas puts us at the rebirth of faith after the paralyzing shock of the death on the cross.

Here, again, the same contents confront us. First, we stand on the solid rock of historic *fact*. Thomas is

secure. The risen Christ is before him, responsive to his finger touch, as well as to his sceptical anxiety. But *how* a man says his creed is often more than what he says. Devils have creeds and say them tremblingly. A creed may be held by the sense and not by the soul. The whole being of Thomas is alive with conviction and feeling, and clothes itself with warm and quickening speech, as the life-sap of the tree bursts into bud and leaf, blossom and fruit. He believes and adores. The man Christ is King and God: Ruler because Revealer, and complete Ruler because Revealer in the completest and intensest degree of the Eternal—"My Lord and my God."

Sixty years have elapsed since this confession when John cites it. Nearly two generations have come and gone. Changes of the most decided and revolutionary character have occurred. Christianity is the most regal fact of the century; it has been preached and denied, betrayed and opposed, misunderstood and accepted. Three memoirs of Christ are in circulation, and various brief sayings—"faithful and worthy of all acceptation"—are current concerning the cardinal facts and ideas of Christianity. Christ Himself is more fully known than ever, and now comes the edifice of New Testament literature. The Gospel of John brings on the top stone with a device, not new, but the very words used by the first Christian: "For these things are written"—concerning the doubt and faith of Thomas, in part—"that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life through His name." John stands at the end of the century where Peter stood sixty years before. Ephesus and Cæsarea Philippi join hands.

The Christian faith of the aged pastor, with all his ripe experience, saintly devotion, and unsurpassable inspiration, is, in its core and substance, the same as that of the young, eager, large-souled, and God-taught pupil of Jesus, when he exclaimed: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

(3.) And now, what about Paul? His is no case of "primordial germs." There you have Christianity developed, stated in its broad inclusiveness. But he is the theologian of Christianity. Yes, in a sense; but it is characteristic of minds of the highest order to combine wide knowledge and breadth of view with unchanging centres of thought. They do not shift their centre, though they may travel along different radii to the far-off points on the edge of the far-spreading circle of their teaching. It is Paul who sums up Christianity in the brief and compact teaching of Romans x. 8-13:—"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Here, again, are the *facts* exemplified in, and crowned by, the resurrection of Christ from the dead; the *forces* bringing righteousness to the heart;

and the all-comprehensive *ideas* of the saving sovereignty of Christ over all souls.

But hear him again. To Paul we owe the completest creed of the Scriptures. I may call it the model creed; as to the facts it embraces, the form it takes, the beauty of its setting, the sweetness of its notes, the superlative wealth of its contents, and the gracious and devout uses to which it is put. Oh! how blessed are we if we know by experience the meaning of the benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all"! Standing again, then, at the beginning of the Great Forty Years, he sees in the tenderness and pitiful compassion of the Saviour's ministry and death the revealing of the heart of God and the advent of souls to partnership in the power of the Holy Spirit. The historical Christ is for him the object-lesson given by the Eternal to men, so that they may apprehend and enjoy His love, and share the gifts of His Spirit. God is in Jesus, Teacher, Redeemer, Pattern, Son of Man, Son of God. God is known by Jesus as the Father, essentially love—love, not as a passive and luxurious emotion, but active, healing, and redeeming. Jesus opens the heart of man by the love of God to the inflow of God, the Inspirer and Energiser, to renew, transfigure, and perfect. "So through Jesus we have our access in one spirit unto the Father."

In the mouth of three witnesses, Peter, John, and Paul, it is indisputably established that the primitive Christian faith, the religion given once for all in those pre-eminently creative years, consisted, first, of a body of sensible, verifiable facts, centering in a life of captivating beauty and grace, matchless purity and love;

secondly, of a mass of spiritual forces, inherent in and inseparable from that Personality; and, thirdly, a set of formative ideas, contained in His life, and words, and work. On Herder's tombstone, at Weimar, are the words, "Life, Love, Light." In the Christianity of the Forty Years, and constituting its real substance, are the facts of the Eternal Life, the forces of the Eternal Love, and the ideas of Eternal Light.

Of the *facts* themselves we are more sure to-day than men have been since the death of the Apostle John * The critic, thinking to discredit their supernatural reality, has only lifted them into clearer radiance, and enabled us to see the Son of Man "in His habit as He lived," with unsurpassable fulness of detail and definiteness of outline. Strauss and his co-workers cleared the ground for the reconstruction of the story of that Life, which is the wonder and redemption of the world; so that it throbs again with impressive humanness, and stirs our hearts with thrilling proofs of its perfect and pathetic divinity. We are not more certain of the enthroned Augustus than of the crucified Redeemer. The facts of the faith have been committed to the custody of the mightiest and most characteristic literary creation of the centuries—the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. "That which was from the beginning, that which men heard, what they saw with their eyes and handled with their hands, concerning the Word of Life; for the Life was manifested, and seen, and attested, even the Eternal Life which was with the Father," is now so sure and steadfast, that our nineteenth century has nothing in all its

* Cf. "Apologetics," by A. B. Bruce, D.D., p. 336 *et seq.*

wide sweep, more indestructible or more indubitable than the history of Jesus—the fourfold witness to the exalted character and marvellous work of the Son of God.

God's best gifts are men. His supremest gift is the Man Christ Jesus. "The Word was made flesh." Christ "came to His own." He was seen and heard, trusted and hated, adored and crucified. Obscure and humble as were his surroundings, He drew men to Him in affectionate discipleship, and cast over them the spell of His sweet authority. He lived a workman's life, spoke but rarely; and yet His words were so wise that we have not yet fathomed their significance, and His ideals so high that we are still panting to realize them. "Good society" despised Him and cast Him out; and yet He constructed a social organism so just and brotherly in its laws, so free and noble in its spirit and beneficent in its work, that it has become the social ideal of the best men of every age and of every land. Respectability sneered at Him; orthodoxy boycotted Him; astute church-leaders tried to ensnare Him, and were themselves caught; flung baseless charges at Him, and were themselves condemned; and, when they could do no more, they plotted for and secured His death. He was despised and rejected of men; and crushed with defeat, He passed away. And yet, marvel of marvels! His very death had such merit in it that it eclipsed His living, and the sacrifice of His life accomplished more than His use of it.

Living, He wrought many wonderful works on the bodies of men and more astonishing changes in their thought and life; living, He made His disciples feel

He was pervaded with an undimmed sense of His own sinlessness, and marked by perfect obedience to the will of His Father. But dying, He puts away the world's sin, and makes an end of it, and so fills and sways the minds of His followers that the record of His last days is the most touching picture and the highest glory of the Gospels. There is but a glimpse of the facts of His boyhood, a bright ray out of its sweet purity. A paragraph describes His baptism; a few sentences portray His warfare with the devil; and even His speeches only appear in fragments; but wide spaces of revelation are replete with His pity towards the lost, compassion for the outcast, and help for the needy; and more than half of the Gospel of John is absorbed with the loving talk, tender sympathy, and perfect sacrifice of His last days; so that we almost expect Him to appear again, as, indeed, He does, triumphant over death, and dedicating His few followers to the gigantic task of preaching His Gospel to "all the nations" of the earth. It fits with the nature of His life that His deepest humiliation should be transfigured into His chief victory, and the cross on which He died become the throne from which He reigns to save and renew the world. Brothers! *we* have not followed cunningly devised fables. They are the fabulists who deny Jesus. Our faith is in its pith and reality, *fact*—historical, verifiable, undeniable fact. Men doubt and deny, resist and repudiate, but our faith does not stand in the wisdom of men or the reasonings of the learned, but on the irremovable basis of the facts of the great Forty Years. Not more surely does geology rest on the solid strata of this globe, and astronomy on suns and stars and satellites, than the new religion of Christ

on the unique and creative facts centering in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God!

The faith of science delivered to the students of these later days consists of *forces* as well as facts; of forces mighty, ubiquitous, and irresistible, not less than of facts visible and measurable; of the light which transfigures hill and dale, sea and shore, with golden beauty; the heat which nourishes the vegetation of the fields, and the life of man; the energy which in Protean forms is doing the daily work of the universe, as well as the iron that ribs and colours the everlasting hills, and the water that fills the ever-rolling ocean. So the primitive Christian faith is the distinct delivery of *new spiritual forces* to men, the advent of unseen supernatural energies to humanity.

His is a beggarly account of the faith that has not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. Oxygen and lime, iron and hydrogen, though primal parts of earth and sun, do not make a world without the energies of light and heat—*i.e.* without the Eternal One—active in all forces, operative through all laws, and using all materials. Thirty years ago the Christian watchword was, "Fight for the facts of original Christianity." The battle is ending. We have won in every part of the field. Our trophies abound, our conquests are secure; but

> "We who are men as men are now,
> Must feel with men in the agonizing present,"

and value the facts for the sake of the forces; verify the tragedy of Calvary, because it is not only a death but a cleansing sacrifice; preach the Christ of the New Testament for the sake of the energies of the

Spirit, and study the typical men of Christianity, so that we may share their supernatural life, and be clad in the strength and graced with the beauty of their God.

Primitive Christianity was charged in every fibre of it with living force. It had not a dead particle in it, but throbbed and bounded with the fulness of life. "It is not for you," said the newly-risen King, "to know the times and the seasons, but ye shall receive *power* after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Paul described the revolution as "the Kingdom of God, not in word but in *power*." A new epoch has dawned. A new society starts into conquering life; a new and quickening speech, creative of a new literature, is heard in Jerusalem and Rome, in Corinth and Philippi. A new type of manhood appears. A new spirit is abroad softening the hearts of men, cleansing the imagination, inspiring reverence and trust and self-sacrifice; singing to the sorrowful and heavy-laden the sweet song of divine love in tones of tenderness; laying its hands of companionship on the head of the lonely, bidding the weary to hope, and the despairing to be of good cheer, in sight of the day of deliverance and glory now at hand.

Approach the Forty Years from the opposite side. Take stock of the moral condition of "all the nations" when Christ Jesus sends His few disciples to evangelize them. Register your facts carefully. Give a high place to all that is noble and pure, exalted and inspiring; for it, too, is of God. Generously estimate the splendid heritage and unspent energies of Greece in such lofty singers as Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; such unequalled philosophers as Plato and

Aristotle and Zeno, and the unforgettable chief of ethical apostles, Socrates. Reckon up every power for good in old Rome—disciplined soldiery, perfected municipal privilege, fine roads, irresistible might, political supremacy, and the stimulating memory of the masterly and mighty Cæsar, eloquent and thoughtful Cicero, stern and unbending Cato, and the accomplished Scipio. Without prejudice, because of the obscurity of the people, add to your stock every ounce of serviceable strength in the possession of the Jews—a race with the highest ideals of character in Moses the lawgiver, David the royal poet, Solomon the wise, and Isaiah the prophet; a race that has come, by the painful but gracious discipline of divine revelation, to yearn for a Deliverer from sin, and a King who shall reign in righteousness. Face these forces for culture and conduct, for beauty and strength, honestly, and set down their exact value and probable issues; and what have you? Let one unbiassed in favour of Christianity answer. Dr. Draper says: "In the reign of Augustus violence paused only because it had finished its work. Faith was dead, morality had disappeared. Around the shores of the Mediterranean the conquered nations looked at one another, partakers of a common misfortune, associated in a common lot; not one of them had found a God to help her in her day of need. Europe, Asia, Africa, were tranquil; but it was *the silence of despair.*"*

May the historian Lecky be cited concerning the much-praised worth of human thought in its higher forms? If so, he says: "Philosophy was admirably

* "The Intellectual Development of Europe," by Draper, vol. i. p. 267.

fitted to dignify and ennoble, but it was altogether impotent to regenerate mankind." *

But, instead of accumulating evidence to show that you might as well attempt to bind a lion with a cobweb as trust to man the work of his own redemption, go to the other end of the Forty Years and ask what has happened in the brief but tremendously impressive and reproductive interval. What has happened? Why, there is not a space like it in the annals of men. Not Attica in the century of its glory, when it produced one great genius for every five thousand of the population, and among them Demosthenes in eloquence, Phidias in sculpture, Plato in thought, Pericles in statesmanship—not Attica in all its glory can equal it.

First comes the *new society*, leaping into life full armed, inspired and victorious on the day of Pentecost. A new institute is itself a new force, as well as a new product. It lifts the individual to the maximum of power, goes far to make twice one not into two, but two hundred, or two thousand. In Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth, Colosse, Galatia, Philadelphia, Asiatic Ephesus, and European Philippi are these societies, with representatives in Cæsar's bodyguard and in Lydia's purple trade, at the gate of Europe and in the centre of the empire.

But wide geographical distribution is their least important feature. A new type of manhood reigns. "My greatest discovery," said one of our scientists, "was a man,"—the gentle, strong, and great Faraday. Christ's greatest discovery was Paul—the cultured, massive, eagle-eyed, enthusiastic, heroic, indescribable Paul. But Paul is only the full flowering of the

* "European Morals," vol. i. p. 4.

Christian tree, the ripest fruit in the Garden of God.

Next *a new literature* is born. The Hebrew Scriptures are rediscovered, their fettered energies unloosed; the long-frozen river melts, and again its streams make glad the city of God. The Old Testament is revised by the pupils of Christ, and renews the vigour of its ancient days. Nearly the whole of the New Testament is produced. James has written for direct, practical, out-and-out Christianity; Peter has comforted and warned the Christians of the Dispersion; Theophilus is reading Luke's memorabilia of Jesus and Peter and Paul; Christians at Corinth and Rome and Galatia are listening to the incisive sentences of the pupil of Gamaliel. Every true book is a force, "the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." Dr. A. B. Bruce declares "that such a book as the Gospels ever came into existence is a kind of miracle." It is a miracle with far more opulent issues for the race of men than those by which Christ Jesus startled the apathy and appealed to the sense of the people of Judæa.

But, best of all, in this new literature and in these new men of the new society, there reigned, supreme and irresistible, the *new spirit* of self-sacrificing love to God and men. Culture and civilization were cold as death in the presence of the evils of the world, and, like Greek philosophy and Roman religion, did not care. That was their character and condemnation. They did not burn with passion to save men and women disinherited by avarice, plunged into the abyss of cruelty by polytheism, and robbed of all the joys of the heart by despair. Whatever may be said of the

Churches of our own day—and God knows they have sins enough—the Church of those Forty Years—O, divine Renewer!—did not permit the poor to rot, meet tyrannous strength with truculence, bend on supple knee to wealth and state, or luxuriate in its own glad emotions. No; it made—

> "all men's good
> Be each man's rule, and universal Peace
> Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
> And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
> Through all the circle of the golden year."

Mohammedanism consecrated slavery, polygamy, and despotism. Christianity *began* the abolition of the first by the death of Christ for each lost man, and the proclamation of the infinite sacredness of the human unit; undermined the second by its emancipation and coronation of woman; and made the government of states, the welfare of the world, by its promulgation of the brotherhood of all men with the Christ. That new spirit expelled cruelty by gentleness, passion by self-control, hardness by pity, pride by humility, impurity by chivalrous fight against the flesh, and hatred by love. As when by some vast secular change the life-destroying glacial epoch gives place to an era of tropical warmth and splendour, and a new flora and fauna appear, so in these four decades humanity had received a new and glorious start towards its predestined goal. The religion of Jesus proved itself in power, even the fourfold power of a new spirit, a new literature, a new manhood, a new society, and so gave birth to a new world.

Hear a parable. From the clouds leaps a force on to the cross fixed at the summit of yonder spire; that force is seen as a flash of light; away it runs down

the metal as a current of electricity; but in its journey it melts the metal as heat; as it moves forward it changes the positions of the atoms of the metal towards one another as magnetism, and at last it bursts through the stone-work as motion. It is one fontal energy from first to last, but it varies its modes of action and manifestation; it is light, electricity, heat, magnetism, and motion; it is all and it is one. So the one Christ in these Forty Years poured out of His fulness, and men received peace and joy, patience and zeal, truth and grace. He teaches truth as no ordinary Rabbi. He only has the words of *eternal* life, and is the *light* of the world. He dies the death of the cross, but His offering is the sacrifice for the sins of the world, and draws and magnetizes all men. He loves, and His glowing affection softens hard hearts, melts to penitence, constrains to self-repression, and impels to the service of men. He rises from the dead, and the resurrection is the beginning of the ascension to the kingly rule of the Spirit which convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment.

This, then, is at the core of our "faith." We cling to the facts with unrelaxed tenacity, and proclaim the ideas with growing clearness; but for importance to sinful men we place in the first rank the redeeming forces of the sacrifice of Christ and the regenerating energy of the Holy Spirit. We believe in the Holy Ghost. He is the breathing formative soul of the body of the primitive faith.

But now, we must ask for the Ideas, given once for all—*i.e.*, with irreversible finality—to the "saints" of the first forty years of the Christian story.

Ah! says the critic, now you are on the shifting sand. Here the rock-base forsakes you. Your history I cannot deny; it is an impregnable fortress. The play of unsubduable energies I admit; the evidence is irrefutable; but when you talk of truths and ideas, I see you have fallen on the loose and jarring shingle of contradictory human opinion.

Wait! Not so fast! Are you not mistaken? Do not imagine that modern scientists have the monopoly of certitude, and toil in totally different ways from their fellow-workers in art and religion; as though, because they experiment with metals and gases and not with souls and Bibles, they do not work with ideas. It is a glaring absurdity. Science is as supersensible as the paintings of Turner, or the discussions of Mill and Hamilton, and is as surely built up with ideas as æsthetics or ethics. Laws of matter are not matter. A trilobite is not science. Botany does not grow in the garden, but in the man. The light of optics is of the soul, although the light of this building is of the sun. To say earth is full of laws and every common bush aflame with science is an utterance of mental conception, although not so beautiful or opulent with deep meanings as the lines of Mrs. Browning :—

> "Every natural flower which grows on earth
> Implies a flower upon the spiritual side."

The fair and beautiful temple of science, of which our generation is so proud, has been built up, every stone of it, by the invisible fingers of thinkers like Bacon and Newton, Herschel and Joule, Brewster and Faraday. Remove from that edifice the ideas expressed in laws of motion, chemical equivalents, correlative forces, and the like, and the building returns to its

primeval chaos. The solid structure made up of observed facts and indestructible forces is, as a structure, as thoroughly the product of *mind* as the ethics of Aristotle, the philosophy of Hegel, or the Christianity of Jesus Christ.

Therefore let no man take offence at our quest for the ideas of the primitive faith, as though we were about to wander in the wild wastes of Will-o'-the-wisp, or the scarcely less innutritious fields of angry debaters. We are still on sure ground. The rock is beneath our feet. Our data are the positive, spontaneous, and massive results of that *mind of Christ* which fills and informs the Christian facts, inspires and directs the Christian forces of the first years of original Christianity.*

For those facts and forces were addressed to the spiritual perceptions and moral necessities of men as men; not as critics, or scholars, or mere thinkers, but as men face to face with the awful facts of sin and duty, sorrow and destiny; and they verified their deep meanings in the living experiences of all sorts and conditions of men with the opulence of proof, of the sun shining at mid-day, and the infallibility of the speech of God. They removed the bitter reproaches of the conscience, and created a deep, unfathomed peace; slew despair, and kindled new hope; won the wavering affections, and inspired nobler ideals; soothed the perplexity born of the presence of evil and suffering, and fed the hunger of the lone soul for divine companionship; interpreted the administration of

* "Without facts no ideas. Without ideas virtually no facts; nothing that is a fact for thought; nothing that the mind can make any use of."—Flint, "Philosophy of History," p. 28.

human affairs, and met the yearning for immortality; so that "merely as a school for ideas of the soul's inmost wants, Christianity is so much above all other philosophies in merit as the noon is more radiant than the rushlight." *

Now as in science and art, so in religion, the determining ideas are few. Dr. "Rabbi" Duncan gave in five words, and in an order of rich suggestion, the fundamental Christian ideas, "God, Law, Sin, Grace, Jesus, and again Law." No statement of the kind could be more adequate, and it is merely varying the language when we elect for the same purpose such words as "God," "God and Man," "Man," "Man and Men," "Sin," "Suffering," "Grace," "Duty," "the Unseen, here and in the Great Beyond."

But it is the first idea that colours, fixes, and governs all—viz., *the idea of God.* A religion is as its conception of God. With that it rises or falls, lives or dies, saves or destroys. The core of the faith delivered to the Palestine saints is the idea of God.

What then is it?

Is it that God is Almighty, First Cause and End of Things, irresistible and eternal? Nature uttered that message with irresistible cogency. The Greek heard it and forthwith formulated it in the creed of the inexorable will of Zeus.

Does Christianity merely proclaim the moral God, "a power making for righteousness"? That was the gospel of the Old Testament, of the history of Moses, the song of the Psalmists, the vision of the prophets, and the philosophy of Job.

What, then, does Christ add to the teaching of

* Joseph Cook. First Series of Lectures, p. 67.

nature? How does He fulfil, *i.e.*, fill out the sketch of the Old Testament?

In a brief, poor sentence that only hints the essential fact, it seems to me, He shows the moral God victoriously dealing with immoral, sinful men. Jesus, the Son of God, on *the cross* gives the Christian conception of God in its most luminous, universal, human, and satisfying form. "We preach," said the most speculative myriad-thoughted and fine-spirited of the saints, who received "the faith," "*We preach Christ crucified, the wisdom of God, and the power of God*"—*i.e.*, *the philosophy of God*, the revelation of His nature, the key to His administration of man's life, and the rule of souls. We preach Christ crucified; the Messiah, but crucified; the Son of Man, but crucified; the Son of God, but crucified; the Holiest of the Holy, but crucified; God in Christ, but in Christ crucified, humiliated, marred, broken, slain in His war against sin, giving Himself to an escapable doom, choosing it in His love for men, giving Himself for our sins, not for His own, that He might deliver us by His sacrifice from this present evil age, with all its awful tyrannies of sin and the devil. God in His beloved Son; His essential Self making atonement, reconciling the world unto Himself; restoring its ideal harmony, getting rid both of the love of sin and the guilt of it; identifying Himself with man in his saddest plight and sorest need; sorrowing and suffering for his wrong, and so cleansing and making him anew; revealing his possibilities of righteousness and service. That is the beating heart of the "faith" of the great Forty Years.

Now the core of the Pagan idea of God is pitiless-

ness ; destiny sweeping on with resistless might against wrong, without heart, and without aim other than that of the destruction of men. There is no atoning God, no cross in the Pagan conception. Islam has gone back to Paganism, for it denies the crucifixion. The God of Mohammed is "solitary, severe, stern"; a fighter, not a redeemer. There is no cross in Mohammedanism. But in the Gospels the mind is fixed on the *crisis* of Christ's suffering, sacrificial life ; suffering freely chosen ; sacrifice eagerly coveted for the sake of the loved prize, a world's redemption. That is God, says Paul ; that is how He feels towards you, that's what He will do for you, that's the measure of His hatred of sin, of His love for your soul, of His desire and will to redeem and renew you. "God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Character is read by the heart, by the feelings that lie at the back of the intellect. The cross appeals to the heart ; it does not affront the reason ; indeed, it satisfies man when He is keenest and most alert rationally ; but its direct appeal is to the universal heart, by which character is swiftly understood and moral change effected ; therefore we preach Christ crucified, the wisdom of God and the power of God.

I need not linger over the other ideas, for that conception carries everthing else. *Sin* is so terrible, and the tragedy of rebellion against the All-Holy God and His law so awful, that He Himself in Christ is

obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that He may get rid of it. Man cannot redeem himself. God can redeem him, and will, and does. The Father will not lose His child.

"*Grace*" abounds. From first to last it is all "grace"; the free outflow of an unsolicited love, the exquisite but trembling delight of a heart "that did not wait to love us till the lonely moment we call our life," but is older than our sin; "for" in the purpose of love "the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world;" and, therefore, the grace of God, rather than the sin of man, is the *true basis of our knowledge of man.* God's love-thought of him being that he should be redeemed and recreated in His own image —the ideal that He formed of him at the beginning, and to realise which He has suffered on our earth.

Surely, then, all appearances in our perplexed and troubled life to the contrary, *love* is the source and root of all things, stronger than hate and mightier than sin; and the end of all our pain and discipline is *righteousness.* Even Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and so became the Pattern and Comforter of suffering souls in all ages. "Grief is joy misunderstood." Tribulation is a gate to the Kingdom. Defeat is not failure. The Crucified rises again and lives for evermore; and He who sacrifices Himself for the welfare of the world can never really die or His work come to nought. It will live in the Kingdom for evermore.

Do men say, "Which King"? There is no King but Jesus. Loyalty to Him is the one supreme law, besought in our first prayer, avowed in our baptism, sustained by our heroic obedience, and vindicated

in the marvellous benefits resulting from our exclusive devotion to His laws of soul-freedom; the supremacy of the spiritual, the suppression of the individual, and the service of all men, as destined to form a true brotherhood in God now, and travelling towards the City of God—a city of righteousness, and peace, and joy.

Ah! friends, *it is true;* the sore malady of our time is that we have failed at the cross But how? Thus: We glory in opinion, idolize intellect, canonize genius, worship brute force and fleeting fashion, and practically deny the cross. The word is on our lips, the meaning is not in our hearts, and the reality not on our wills. We do not see God as He is there; and, therefore, we do not judge sin as God does, nor treat it as He does *there.* We do not even behave to our friends as Christ did to His *foes.* The suffering Jesus is too far away from the actual life of the Church, and so Christ is kept out of the hearts of men. Oh! that with the intense passion and full truth of Paul every man of us could say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the *world* is crucified unto me, and *I* unto the world."

Such, then, is, in outline, the veritable substance of the primitive Christian faith, delivered by its Author and Finisher to saints like Peter and Thomas, James and John, Matthew and Jude, Dorcas and Lydia, Mary and Phœbe, Euodias and Syntyche, Timothy and Titus, Luke and Paul. They knew whom they believed. Christ Himself, in His glorious fulness, was their Christianity. He was their Redeemer and Leader, and they were all brothers and friends and followers. Alike they held Him Sovereign; wanted no other, and

refused any other, even though one of themselves. In His love they trusted, by His word they were cleansed, in His cross they gloried—a shame and a folly to men; but an atonement, wisdom, and victory for all who believed. By His risen life they lived one strong, compacted life, distributed but not divided, multitudinous yet single, enthusiastic but yet controlled, sublimely heroic and yet tender as a mother's love, and gracious as the heart of God. "*I live,*" said each one, conscious of the new onward pulsing force in him; and yet scarcely is the sentence off his lips than it is fetched back by the dominant sense of the present Redeemer, to whom he owes all. "I live, yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me.*" Filled with the powers of the Holy Ghost, illumined and guided by the ideas received through His anointing, they hazarded their lives to save men everywhere, and to fill up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ.

That faith has held, and been held, by the saints of all ages. In it they have lived and suffered, fought and served. The cross has been the rallying point of the vast brotherhood of God, the magnetic centre of the Christian host.* Amid mordant differences of opinion, inevitable fertility in theories and vast variety of expression, men have confessed their trust in the Saviour with sweet harmony through all the centuries. Listen to their several voices! Hear the companions and successors of the apostles! From Clement, a contemporary of John, comes the invitation, "Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious it is to God, His Father, which, being shed for our

* Cf. S. R. Pattison on the History of Evangelical Christianity, for a fine collection of proofs.

salvation, brought the grace of repentance to all the world." Following him, we have the rich spiritual message to Diognetus, "God does not hate us, He is not mindful of our iniquities, He has borne with our sins, and has given us His dear Son as the price of our redemption, the just for the unjust. Justice alone could forgive transgression. Oh! happy exchange which is effected, so that the iniquities of many are covered by the righteousness of one, and the obedience of one justifies the many sinners." An unknown Christian sums up the faith of the second century in the compact words, "I have no other annals but Jesus Christ, His cross, His death and resurrection." *

And what is it we hear in the latter ages but the glad and exultant cry of faith in the same sacrifice! That is the everlasting experience, and, therefore, the everlasting faith. Summon ecclesiastics like Andrewes and Usher, Jeremy Taylor and Hooker, and the last, speaking for them all, says, "We care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the Son of Man, and that men are made the righteousness of God." Register the witness of stalwart souls such as Wycliffe and Latimer, Luther and Cromwell, expressed in the dying words, thrice repeated, of the pure-hearted Protector, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." But, "all the promises of God are in Him. Yes, in HIM; Amen. To the glory of God by us—by us in Jesus Christ." Let Bunsen gather up the judgment of the wide and well-drilled scholarship of Origen and Athanasius, Augustine and Anselm, Melancthon, and hundreds

* Quoted from Pressensé's "Life of Christ," p. 130.

more, as, standing on the very brink of the river of death, he tells us there is no way across except by the "Bridge of the Saviour." Great as our heritage is in all souls, yet I may be pardoned if I recall the sayings of Baptist fathers and leaders. Here comes Carey, crowned with the crowns of learning and industry, philanthropy and zeal, but breathing the very soul of him in the strain :

> "A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> On Thy kind arms I fall;
> Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
> My Jesus and my All."

Catch the bold tones of the Kettering preacher and divine as, speaking for himself and the preaching brotherhood to which he belongs, Andrew Fuller says:— "We hold, as did Samuel Pearce, that the doctrine of the cross is the only religion for a dying sinner." Bend now over the essayist prince, and weigh the sifted and solemn words John Foster utters :—"My own reflections are deeply accusatory. I often think what insufferable melancholy would oppress and overwhelm me if there were not the grand resource of the one all-sufficient Sacrifice offered for sin."

And are *we* changed? Have we lost our centre? Are Carey, and Fuller, and Foster no longer represented? Have we given up the cross? Have we moved from the substance of the faith of our fathers? Do we not stand on the facts and forces and ideas of the Great Forty Years? Then God forgive us. We are lost, and our labour is a folly, an irritation, and a menace. Given up? A thousand times, No! Given up? Come, dear Charles Stovel, from your place in the glory, and tell men "what was your business upon earth." "I have spent," he says, a little before his

departure, "a large portion of my life in bringing the words of Christ to the test of experience. I bear my witness that the claims of Christ are justified by the declarations of experience. I have also been constantly observing the words of Christ passing into successful experiment in the lives of believers. If you ask me, what is my business here upon earth, I answer: I am working out the grand experiment of the Redeemer's love. If that fail me—

> 'The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble.'"

Given up? Beloved Comber! why did you go to the Dark Continent? What impulse moved? What passion stirred? "None but Christ; none but Christ." Given up, fathers in our Israel? How it pierces our souls through and through to think it; and yet the reproach may be meekly borne for His sake! Given up, brothers? Then what are you living for? I only say what you feel, when I declare, "If I forget Thee, O Christ of God, Saviour of sinners, may my right hand forget its cunning, my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Christ, and Christ crucified, and Christ risen, to my chief joy." Given up, younger comrades? Never; no, never! Were it so, we would fling up our work as we would dash hottest iron from our hands, and leave behind us a ministry that can never be a true service, and must be a fatal misery without His sacrifice, His presence, and His power. Yes; we are united by experience. Opinion divides; life in Christ makes one. We take up the language of the sage, "He who knows Christ knows enough, though he knows not other things; and he who knows not Christ knows nothing, though he knows other

things." With an energy no breath can express, we say again, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now may we go to the same prolific Forty Years for guidance as to the best methods for securing the acceptance of Christ by all men, and the enthronement of His religion as the religion of mankind? Different as our circumstances are from theirs, does their way of working afford infallible proofs of divine inspiration, and so come to us with all the authority of a divine mandate?

I unhesitatingly answer "Yes." For whatever tests we may apply to their method—fitness for the exact work to be done, swiftness of execution, width of success, quality of result, purity and sweep of the principles employed, there is only one answer ringing across the ages—"This is the way, walk ye in it."

First, then, they bid us joyously and with splendid abandon live our Christianity in our own life, in the whole of it, in the free subjection of our thought to the discipline of Christ, in the surrender of will to His unquestioned sovereignty, in conforming behaviour to His example, in utter detachment from self and the world, and the exquisite play of our new life in His service, and we take the surest course to establish His religion at the springs and sources of the world's life. A bright, joyous religion, filled with the radiance of the love of God, kills despair, kindles hope, slays self, begets obedience to law, and creates a boundless love. "We love because He first loved us." "The love of Christ constrains us not to live to ourselves." The soldier who bids us "contend earnestly for the faith"

has in one sentence, brief as a telegram, compact as a general's order, summed up his directions for warfare in the words, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." That is the way to take care of the faith. Get out of that love, and shout as you may, fight as you will, you are lost, and the "faith," so far as you are concerned, is lost too. Sunshine is life, nourishment, medicine. Love is the sunshine of God. Catch the sun. Never wander out of it. Move your positions till you get in it, and so that you may keep in it. Do your man-building in its brightness. For your faith is to be used as the soldier uses bread and water, as the invalid the breezes of the sea and of the mountain-side, as the sick man the healing medicine, and therefore always to be used in the sun. Build yourselves on your faith, but in the love of God. That is the builder's living and working "environment." Out of it he and his work perish, in it he builds for time and eternity; and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Here is the first great commandment: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Better lose all than lose love. He wins who keeps that supreme. He loses who says one bitter word, writes one selfish line, or moves one inch out of the love of God and of his brother. If any man have not the *spirit* of Christ he is none of His. He may be the Church's, and belong to all the unions of Christendom, and have the applause of all men, but he is not Christ's in so far as he lacks His spirit. We hurt the faith more by hardness and self-will and unbrotherly behaviour than by confused opinions or false definitions. Ruskin says, "We have been taught a religion of pure mercy, and we must either now betray it or learn to

defend it by fulfilling it." So did the first Christians defend the faith, filling out its sublime programme with the golden splendours of their devotion, the burning fires of their love to God and to souls, the passionate aggressive effort to bring all men to the knowledge of Him who, by the grace of God, tasted death for every one.

O Lord Jesus, shed abroad that love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and fuse our souls in the blessed unity of an unbroken devotion to Thee in the salvation and service of men!

Set Christianity to work in and on others, is the *second* great commandment in the New Testament law. It is palpable beyond all dispute that the saints of the original Forty Years held that they had received a religion not for show, but for work—not as a creed for debate, but as the power of God unto salvation; a working force intended to renew and conquer. The disciples went everywhere preaching the Word; they had a message, and each was to deliver it. It was his main business in life to see that the gospel was heard and understood, and the forces of the Spirit accepted and enjoyed. Christ was attacked, they defended Him; misunderstood, they explained Him; persecuted, they died for Him; unknown, they set Him forth.

Again I say, if any one asked me to describe the chief vice of present-day Christendom, I should affirm it to be *that men do not believe in Christ Jesus enough to use Him and His Gospel always, everywhere, and out and out.* They dare not do as He would if He were visibly here, or say what He would say of wealth, and orthodoxy,

and ecclesiasticism, and trade, and poverty, and of our inmost selves. We distrust Him, not as the Saviour from guilt, but as the Saviour from sinning—from all kinds, and sorts, and degrees of sinning. We keep Him out of our politics, and go on in wrong; out of our trade, and make bad paper, bad clothes, bad buildings; out of our social life, and grind the poor, and stop our ears with cotton wool, so that the cries of agony and misery may not disturb us, and we let drink and harlotry flourish; out of our pleasures, and allow them to debase and sensualize our fellows; out of our churches, and so perish of our conventionalisms and respectabilities. He cannot do the mighty works wanted because of our unbelief. His religion fails to become the personal and social force it is meant to be because we do not use it. If a "declaration" about it would do it, we could make dozens; if creed passing would do it, we could get patent machines for creed-making by the score; if appointing a Committee and passing resolutions would effect it, it would be accomplished every week; if debating in newspapers were enough, we should succeed grandly. But it has to be *worked* day and night, amongst the thriftless and the cultured, in the slums and in the universities, at home and on the exchange; and for this simple and homely task we are poor, alas! unspeakably poor. We discuss where we should live, persecute where we should sympathize, put a system where we want a heart, appeal to men as critics where we ought to speak to their higher faculties, regal conscience, moral intuitions, craving for God, for the sight of His love, for His free pardon, and the assured sense of His sweet aid. We give a sermon, and the world asks for

soul; a tract, and it wants quickening life; a talk, and it sighs for work; a machine, and it still calls for a MAN. *The incarnation of the Christ of the cross is the one thing needful;* the Gospel of the Atonement translated into the vernacular of the world; the Christ of Galilee and Gethsemane, the street preacher, the comrade of the working man, the friend of the fallen woman, brought into actual touch with the real life of the dwellers in the cities and villages of the world. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, and on some have mercy that are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." O zeal of Christ, seize us, absorb us, consume us! Give us no rest night or day, except as we are saving our fellows and glorifying Thee!

But we must not forget that only less urgent was the task of the first teachers of adjusting the new ideas received from Christ with all preceding teaching, and clearing the revelation of God of the confusions and mists with which it was overcast by men. Though Peter had lived in the bracing air of the north, and was so open-minded as not to be offended at the astounding claims of Christ, and, moreover, was illumined by the Holy Ghost, yet it was necessary he should be freed from his misconceptions of the mission of Christ, due to his misreading of the older revelation, before he could preach the Gospel to Cornelius. Did not Paul go to Arabia for three years that he might fit the vaster meanings of the Son of God revealed in him with all he had learnt from his most revered teachers of the Judaism in which he was cradled? Say what we will

about "progressive theologies," no one need look far to discover *retrogressive* ones. So corrupt is man that he cannot hold the revelation of God in his mind without staining it through and through. The purest divine ray is soon laden with the dust of man's depravity. The history of religion is the history of frequent falls. Get a few paces from the original fount, and the stream has lost its pellucid clearness. A current of cold air turns the floating moisture into crystals and flings them at us, sometimes, with the deadly force of a blizzard; so the frosts of our human life crystallize the thoughts of God, and the winds of passion drive them along the lanes of life to the grave hurt of souls. Clearing the revelation of God in Christ from the confusions of men has ever been one of the necessary ways of defending the faith.

The leaders of Christianity *did* it by two processes. *First, they gave clear exposition of the older speech of God in the light of the newer; and, secondly, two of their number*—Paul and John—*set the Gospel in its true relations as the centre of all available and usable truth, and began building a coherent and ordered system of Christian thought.*

(*a.*) To this day our Scriptures require "opening," so that men may see their profound meanings, and enjoy their exhaustless fruitfulness. Bad systems of interpretation confuse and bewilder many minds. Exaggeration distorts, prejudice blinds, materialism degrades, tradition clouds, and laziness confounds—and so the Word of the Lord is bound. Delitzsch, the patriarch of expositors, says: "By a continually deepened exegesis can we prepare the way for the Church of the Future." That is the divine plan

obeyed with infinitely blessed results, in apostolic times, and sure to lead to light and progress in our own. Let the Bible be studied with every appliance of modern criticism, and every result of modern research. Let us encourage our best young men to give their nights and days to the study of the complex facts of Scripture and Christian history. Sustain strenuous and disciplined preachers in their search for the veritable Word of the Lord. Let every pastor be made to feel that we rejoice when he is more afraid of misrepresenting a single line or a single word of the Bible than of all the anathemas of Christendom. "Glasgow prospers by the preaching of the Word." The Churches and the Kingdom prosper by the clear, full, and luminous exposition of the revelation of God in Christ.

(*b.*) Not so readily does this generation accept the second method. It is disposed to repudiate the foremost saint of the Forty Years, the beloved John, when he discusses Jesus, as the Logos, the Eternal Word; and to turn from the foremost philosopher, Paul, when he builds his philosophy of God on the broad basis of the sacrifice of the Son, and crowns the edifice with the consummation of all things in Him. Forsooth, we have become so scientific that we despise the science of theology! It is the most flagrant anachronism of our day. And yet it is not altogether surprising. The Church has had so many bad theologies, and loved them so unwisely, that we can hardly wonder that some of her sons should look on a theologian as a disguised enemy. I can scarcely refuse confessing that I have myself been sometimes afraid of him.

But what is theology? It is science. What is science? It is the interpreting of registered facts or

observed forces in an orderly and coherent system. That ought not to be disastrous. Sure I am that theological ignorance breeds confusion, creates panic, incapacitates preachers, and in hundreds of cases locks the door of the Kingdom of Heaven, whilst even a knowledge of historical theology is wonderfully soothing, and conduces to "sweet reasonableness" and settled peace. One sees with ever-increasing clearness that the "theology" of the "faith" is always separable from the "faith" itself, its facts, its forces, and its ideas, as surely as the science of the sun is from the use of its light, or the chemistry of wheat from the assimilation of its nourishing properties. We see that as the possession of flocks and herds does not require a knowledge of zoology, so a disciple of early Christianity may adore Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, without understanding the whole drift of the Hebrew Bible, or the loftiness of the hope of the religion in which he had been brought up, or the vaster significance of his own confession. We see that the contents of the faith are the life and death of Christ, the power of His sacrifice and of His spirit, the grace and truth that came by Him; whereas the contents of theology consist of the orderly and systematic *interpretations* of the contents of the faith. We see that the faith is delivered once for all, as nature itself is given once for all, and its forces, though they may change, never suffer loss, but that as science is, according to Huxley, always provisional, so theology is, and is the effort of the mind of man to avail itself of all the gifts of the One and Universal God, in the exposition and application of the "nature," the solid

indestructible body of Christianity, to the ever-changing conditions of the life of man.

In my judgment, one of our needs is a God-inspired theologian, an Athanasius, an Augustine, a Calvin, an Arminius. God has crowded our time with His gifts. Never was the world so big or its treasures so great. He who spoke to our fathers and the prophets is the living God, and the echoes of His voice are many. The very bounties of God create our difficulties and impose irremovable obligations. Physical science, comparative religion, travel, our own missionary work, the rediscovery of man as man, and as man in society, have rendered many minds less open to religious truth, pushed God Himself away from their thought and life, made the conception of His redeeming sympathy and love more necessary, but no more easy of apprehension. God sees what we want, and He loves us; and in the fulness of time He will send us the man of His preparing who will make manifest once again that He rules in the whole life of man, and that all things serve Him that He may save the race by His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. May God in His mercy hasten the gift!

I must not forget that the Founder of Christianity died young, not being more than thirty-three years of age, and yet with His work finished; that His first disciples responded to His call, and came forward to cast in their fortunes with His as fresh, eager, open-eyed, enthusiastic young men. John was the youngest of them all, but he lives for ever in the literary monument he has reared to his Master's power, under that Master's inspiration. Paul, too, was only in the prime

of his younger manhood when he made the great decision, and said—

> "Christ! I am Christ's! and let the name suffice you,
> Ay, for me, too, He greatly hath sufficed;
> Lo! with no winning words I would entice you,
> Paul has no honour and no friend but Christ."

The annals of Christianity are radiant with the beautiful story of the love-gifts of redeemed youth. The "faith" delivered to young "saints" is pre-eminently for the young; its robust sense, clear reason, large ideals, fine enthusiasms, and noble daring give it an air of perennial youth, and make it worthy to captivate the allegiance of the young manhood of the world.

In our day the perils of the young thicken on all sides, and the responsibilities of the Churches increase proportionately. It is a time of religious crisis; and in times of crisis the young are the first to suffer, and their attitude determines the final issue of the campaign. Just from the schools, in which they have handled the new methods of science, studied the past in the dry light of reasoned accuracy, heard of the religions of mankind, spoken the new language and thought the new thought of this day of God, they pass into an atmosphere electric with doubt. Idolatry of intellect tempts them. The heart is in danger of being starved to make the head. Scepticism floats into their nature with the air they breathe, flattens life, narrows their horizon, paralyzes the conscience, fetters the will, and saps the character. We need take the utmost care. We cannot save or help them by the clashing of our creeds; the noise bewilders. We shall not win their confidence by pounding scientists in the mortar of our criticism once a week; it only excites their ridicule.

We shall not inspire reverence by talking of "evolution," as though Christianity were suspended on a South Kensington hypothesis; and setting up our interpretation of the Scripture as though it were a declaration straight from the lips of God; that way lies incredible mischief. Worse than useless will it be for us to ban thinking and denounce inquiry; they will simply leave us to utter our priestly intolerance to the aged and apathetic. Why should we needlessly affront their reason? Better to bring them, by warm sympathy and direct heart-speech, to Jesus Himself, constraining them to touch Him, or, at least, to touch the hem of His garment, to trust in His work for their pardon, and obey the light which comes from His face as promptly as it reaches their eyes, believing that as they will to do His will, they shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or men.

God sends us into the world, not to condemn it, but that the world may be saved through His Son, whom we preach; and He judges us by our faithfulness to that purpose of salvation. But, to be faithful to men, we must really love them, think with them, feel with them, enter into all their life, and so persuade them to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. The battle of Christianity will be fought and won amongst the young; and victory is assured in the measure in which we can bring their souls to trust His work for them and in them, and so partake of the life of His everlasting love.

JESUS CHRIST: HIS PERSON AND HIS PLAN.

"Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name."—JOHN xx. 30, 31.

THESE words describe the chief purpose of the Gospel according to John considered as a narrative of the life of Jesus. In their effect, though not by their position, they form the author's explanatory preface to the whole book, because they assert the reason why he wrote, and indicate the kind of result he anticipated for the readers of his work.

John felt that the life of Christ had a perpetual value for men. The Lord Jesus was not an ordinary person, had not an ordinary career, and therefore ought not to have an ordinary fate. He was not a simple mortal with common relations to the past, and without any legacies for posterity; but one who gathered into Himself all the nobility and worth of preceding times as into a focus, and was fitted to become the fountain of strength and life for men through succeeding ages. The Son of Man had touched with His sympathetic hand and unrivalled powers the whole circle of human life, and invested every object therein with unfading beauty and exceeding grace. His "signs" spoke to the sorrows and griefs of men, and are eminently

worthy of the opportunity of repeating their messages to the care-burdened heart as long as man may open his ears for words from the Unseen. His "sayings" contained truths so original, and yet so pertinent to all that concerns the true progress of man, that no age ought to be without their illuminating presence. His perfect goodness, embodying in the fullest degree the Christian idea of holiness which He had created, was such that it would have been an irreparable injury to have been bereft of the story which enshrined His portrait. The redemptive work He accomplished was so freighted with the best gifts of our Heavenly Father to His erring children, that to bring it into human literature, and make it contemporary with every age, was to set wide open the door of Heaven and lead men to walk therein; therefore these things were written, that men may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing they may have life in His name.

The theme of these words — Jesus Christ: His Person and His Plan—has been exercising the thoughts of men for successive centuries, but probably never so fully as in the present. The conflict of opinion began in the brief ministry of the Saviour in Jerusalem; and though sixty generations have passed away since His ascension to Heaven it has not ceased. The warfare waxes in intensity. His wondrous life is being written again in the full blaze of the new lights of this nineteenth century; of a historical criticism, as inexorable as it is fruitful; of a material science, vaunting its perfection but gradually discovering its limitations; and of a worship of humanity bidding for the place of the religion of Christ. The enemies of the cross are

not doubtful of the issue. One bluntly says, "The study of the life of Jesus is the snare in which the theology of our time is destined to be taken and destroyed." Another declares, "In a certain sense our God is different from the God of the writers of the New Testament; our world is undoubtedly different, and our Christ can no longer be the same." Nor is this all. The shout of triumph rings in the camp of the foe. Christianity is, so they say, already destroyed, and seeks with halting, but sure, steps a deserved grave along with the worn-out superstitions of a credulous past. The arrows of criticism have shot through the weak places of the armour of the Captain of Salvation, and His intellectual and moral errors are laid bare to the gaze of men. Christ has been stripped of the false glories in which loving disciples and weak women had robed Him, and it is now seen that "beautiful errors" were the secret of His power. Falsehood, therefore, has been more fruitful of good than truth. The richest grapes of eighteen hundred years have grown on a thorn!

But the foundation of God standeth sure. We do not give up our convictions because Simon Magus is a hypocrite, nor ought we to tremble because the literalist "scribes" misrepresent Christ; and the "priests" of culture attack Him. We hail any controversy concerning the Prophet of Nazareth, believing that anything that brings men into His presence is likely to be fraught with good. To touch but the hem of the garment of the Healer of souls is a blessing; and men and women will rejoice by-and-by, although it be a wearying disease or a pestilent error that forces them beyond the strength of their courage, through pressing

crowds of doubts and fears, to stretch forth the trembling hand of trust and stand for a moment within the fringes of His healing power.

The person of Jesus is the divine centre of Christianity, and the controlling figure of the Gospel history. In the former everything depends upon Him as its basis, and in the latter everything gathers around Him as its living core. The principal intention of each Evangelist is to report the works and words of the Master, not, indeed, so fully as he might have done, but with such completeness as he judged necessary to induce his readers to believe in the Saviour's name. Owing to the special conditions under which each Gospel was written, it is possible for us to discover a suggestive variety in the four-fold representation of the one life; but assuredly the foundation on which each historian builds is the person and plan of Christ. Behind all they narrate and describe—fragments of sermons, complete parables, practical and oft-repeated aphorisms, good deeds in the quiet village or the bustling city—it is intended we should see the form of the Son of God, the presiding spirit of the whole.

His presence pervades and suffuses every part of the story. Each writer puts Him in the foreground of his picture, and makes all else subordinate to the exhibition of His inimitable character. It is impossible for us to accept the thinnest "rudiment of certainty" in the Gospel account without being brought face to face with the marvellous person of the Son of Mary. Here is a world from which we are as absolutely incapable of banishing Him as we are of excluding the sun from the heavens. His presence glows on every page, is the life of every scene, the thread of gold travers-

ing the entire web, the crowning glory of the whole.

Are we favoured with glimpses of His legislation? It is not merely that we may see by what politics and according to what rules He would govern men, but that we may behold the King in His beauty, and, being enamoured of His charms, yield ourselves in loving homage to His benignant authority. Do we listen to words of grace proceeding from His mouth? It is not as though He were merely another Socrates uttering His opinions as to "what is to be worshipped and what is not, what is beautiful and what disgraceful, what is just and what is unjust"; but that being brought into His presence we may obtain the spiritual life which flows along His words. Are we ushered into the audience-chamber of this King of men, and privileged to behold His miracles? It is not for the sake of seeing the signs, nor that we may open wide the eyes of our wonder and be led to chant the praises of Christ as though He were a magician, but that we may have vital fellowship with the Son of Man, and ourselves do greater works than these through the indwelling of His power. From first to last the aim of the Evangelist is to describe what He did and said, so that he may make plain what He was;* for these things were written that men may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they may have life in His name.

This spirit the historians had caught from their Instructor. No other method was possible to them in

* "The Synoptics bear witness to the existence in the Palestine Church of a simple healthy objectivity, which desired to know the facts of Christ, to ascertain as far as possible what He said and did, to get a clear, vivid picture of His life and human personality"—"The Kingdom of God," by Dr. A. B. Bruce, 4th edit., p. 335.

narrating such a life, for Jesus had made Himself the pivot of all His sayings and the goal of all His works. It is here the marvel begins. From this point we journey along a course which peremptorily refuses to be satisfactorily explained on any merely natural principle. The predominance of Jesus in the evangelistic records might, for the most part, have been easily accounted for by literary considerations only; but there is something so thoroughly unprecedented in the perpetual and exaggerated prominence given by Jesus to Himself in all His teaching and throughout all His works, both in the Synoptics and in the Gospel of John,* that the supernatural or the infra-human is at once forced upon us, and between the two we must make our choice. To men who set themselves to explain the life by ordinary causes, this is no inconsiderable difficulty. They do not know what to do with it. They cannot deny it, though they have a "rudiment of certainty" of the extremest tenuity. Approaching it, they express their wonder, and then in a rhapsodical utterance take their leave in quest of less perplexing ground. Everywhere the fact meets us. "He did not," confesses Renan, "preach His opinions; He preached Himself." Throughout His teaching there is a wearying and offensively repetitious egotism, unless, indeed, we feel that we are listening to one who is our God and Saviour. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me." "Without Me ye can do nothing." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give

* Cf. Wendt's "Teaching of Jesus," for the comparison of the teaching of the Synoptics with that of the Gospel of John. Vol. i. 203, 242, 248; vol. ii. 151, 182.

him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The same fact is indisputably supreme in the miraculous works of Christ. The object of the exertion of His wonder-working power was not to gain the applause of men, but the love and worship of Himself as the way to their new life. He was no sorcerer. There is nothing of the patron of sensationalism in Him. He positively refused to perform miracles to satisfy mere curiosity, and taught His immediate disciples that it was a far worthier thing to believe on Him for His love, and grace, and goodness, than for His "works." A wonder-born faith was depreciated; whilst love like that of Mary's, which gathered about His gracious character and spent itself in lavishing its stores upon Him, received an abundant reward. His "works" were "signs" of what He was, the transjection of His attributes before the eyes of men, that seeing them they might love and live. His unstained unselfishness, strong compassion, gentle sympathy, and divine beneficence, wrote themselves out anew in a living gospel in the healed bodies and enfranchised minds of poor and suffering men, and repeated in another manner the comfortable words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Following the steps of the Evangelist and of our Lord, we cannot err in attaching importance to the investigation of this passage concerning the person of Christ. Here, first of all, be it observed He is described as *Jesus*. This designation gives Him a place in the history of the world, allocates and identifies Him with men, and forms a useful starting-point for all inquiries

concerning His character. At once we meet with Him on the plane of human life, in the midst of the known and the knowable, a man like ourselves, grafted on the stock of common humanity, and in most essential respects identical with us. His name was not an unfamiliar one at the beginning of the present era. There was nothing strange in it to the ears of His companions in the streets of Nazareth. Betokening Him through whom Jehovah sends salvation, it had passed into common circulation, and was often represented by the Greek Jason. In the list of seventy-two commissioners sent by Eleazar to Ptolemy, it is found twice. One of the books of the Apocrypha is attributed to Jesus the son of Sirach. A companion of St. Paul's at Rome was Jesus, surnamed Justus. According to Matthew the name was given to the son of Joseph because it fitly described the purpose He would adopt, and the work He was destined to accomplish for men.

Certainly events have justified the prophecy uttered in the name. John regarded it, as appears from his first Epistle as well as in this Gospel, as fixing the real human personality of his Lord. It chronicled and reported the fact that He was made a little lower than the angels, that He had a manhood as veritable as our own. His name was not Gabriel or Michael, but Jesus—a common, human, historic name, fitting well the man whose place in the successions of the race of men it registers. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." "He was made of a woman, made under the law." His human nature was real There was nothing simulated or abridged about Him. He was the fulness of humanity in its depth and height,

length and breadth. No one was ever more human than Jesus. Never was one so completely and thoroughly man as He!

This has abundant corroboration in the fact that Jesus describes Himself as *the Son of Man*, in the hearing of His disciples and antagonists, with a frequency that is an argument, a persistence of purpose that is convincing, and an emphasis on the *suffering* experiences of man that reveals His perfect sympathy and love. The apostolic writings plainly and of set aim shun that mode of representing Christ as though it inadequately expressed the exalted estimate of His character their authors had formed, so that (it is said) there are only three instances in the whole of the New Testament (the Gospels excepted) in which He is referred to by that name, and even those speak rather of His heavenly than earthly appearances; whereas the Lord Himself uses this phrase eighty-eight times in the four Gospels to portray His relations to men. Again and again He introduces it, even under circumstances in which we should least expect it; for when He is chiefly concerned to affirm His equality with the Father, He afterwards appends the statement descriptive of His being also the Son of Man. Christ appeared as a man, was a man, and as such wished to be known and remembered. He belonged to mankind, and would not have it forgotten. He took upon Himself our nature in its infirmities, so far as they are not moral defects, and in that nature He suffered, learning obedience thereby, and so wrought out His purpose and made life possible to man; and He held that it was essential to the success of His plan that it should never be erased from the records of Christianity, that

"as by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead."

The history of Christ proves His perfect identity with ourselves. We feel that we are reading a human life-story. His character was gradually unfolded by means of a mother's affectionate solicitudes, a father's authoritative instructions, the probings of trial, the culture of holy aspirations, the severe discipline of temptation, resolute self-government, frequent communion with God, and a faithful obedience to the commands of duty. Although He finished His career as the wisest of teachers, He began it as the humblest of learners. Though at His death He was peerless in goodness and unmatched for all kingly qualities of character, yet not like a gourd in the night had He sprung up, but with painful slowness, even as a youth goes through the critical scenes of his earliest manhood to the solid strength, undaunted purpose, and resolute will of a consecrated life. He heard the voice of Wisdom crying in the streets and learnt her lessons, sat by the streams of Hebrew sacred literature and imbibed knowledge, worked as a carpenter at His father's bench and became strong, endured suffering as a son of the Eternal and learned obedience. The crises of His life are repeating themselves in ours to-day, and it is well indeed for us if we can pass through ours as He did through His. The clouds of doubt hung o'er His sunny horizon, and hid the bright and beautiful from His gaze. Visions of hope cheered and sustained him in the perilous ascent of the mountain path of holiness. The gnawing worm of disappointment and the corroding touch of grief did not

pass Him by as too sacred for their visitation. He was a man of sorrows, and sicknesses were His familiar friends. Death rudely invaded the selectest circles of His affection, and tears started from His eyes at the grave of Lazarus. That universal teacher, Experience, who with her wand of office calls us all to school and gives us the advantage of her discipline, did not excuse His attendance, but after some painstaking sent Him forth her most perfect and finished pupil. He partook of our susceptibility to mature by trial, to become strong by suffering, to grow by feeling and doing rather than by dreaming and knowing; and finally gained the altitude of human greatness, not by waiting for fortune's favourable winds to waft Him to the height of His sanctified ambition, but by patiently climbing, though with wounded feet, the jagged rocks of duty and sacrifice. We repeat it, there never was a man more man than He!

Jesus died young; after a brief ministry, but not before He had become the ideal of manhood, and established additional claims to be considered in a distinguished sense *the* Son of Man. The climax of His career was in the darkest night, but a night that only gave fresh brilliance to the star of purity which shone on His brow. He had passed safely through the most perilous time of human life, and stood forth at the last, apparently beaten, but really a victorious Captain who had defeated every foe, and was scattering the largesses of His beneficence amongst His expectant soldiery. He began well. Conquering in the first and severest crisis, He proves Himself the pattern man.

No hour in life's short day equals in tragic interest that early one which links the youth with the man, when

there is dimly but with growing distinctness dawning on the soul the sense of its unfolding power, of its immense capacity, of its noble desires and new and untold possibilities. It is the era when the chrysalis of youth is cast off, and the new being that is to mould its own grand future makes its first essays in life and duty. The excitement is great. As when the far-resounding sea is lashed by fiercest winds, so the soul is agitated to its lowest depths. Every faculty is raised to the highest pitch of action. Ambitious schemes leap through the soul in rapid succession, like troops of fancies through a poet's dream. Visions follow visions. Temptations gather in besieging crowds, and impetuously rush at every gate of the soul. Angels and men fervently watch and pray for the hour when the crisis shall be past. Some go through this trying period with faith in God, fortitude, and self-mastery, and they come out men, fully panoplied for the warfare of life, and ready to serve God and their fellows. But many, alas! too many, yield to the intoxication of the hour, and are destroyed for ever. The toga of liberty they have received on their advent to manhood is used as a disgraceful cloak for a degrading licentiousness. But whatever the issue, the trial must be met. We cannot take the position and responsibilities of men without confronting it. The entrance upon life is through a wilderness tenanted by demons waiting to assail us in our extremity, and by successive strokes of flattery to buy the worship for themselves which should be given to God only.

How welcome, then, the appearance of the representative man, who, in reference to this dawning of manhood, is pre-eminently the type of what we ought to

be, and the guide to what we ought to do. As He will not let men forget that He is the Son of Man, so He will not have us suppose He has outgrown the sympathies of His later youth. His history contains the temptation in the desert as well as the Mount of Transfiguration, a fierce fight with the devil as well as the resurrection from the grave; and thereby assures His aid when most it is needed in the whole education of life. His young manhood meets us with sympathy and help just as we go forth to the Armageddon of our history.

But the representative humanity of Jesus extends to the whole compass of our life, to its duties and joys, even to its saddest and darkest phases, its crushing and agonizing sorrows, and the tangled mystery of pain, disappointment, and bereavement. The Son of Man was a sufferer by pre-eminence; and He will not let us forget it. He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. Though in the form of God, He emptied Himself of His glories, and became obedient unto death, preferring the most painful and ignominious death, even that of the cross, rather than commit the slightest infraction of the law of God. The Son of Adam did not pass by the cup of suffering, but in drinking its dregs on the slopes of Olivet and on the cross, bore away its curse and substituted a benediction, cast out its poison and changed it to most nutritious food. He suffered being tempted. His brief life was crowded with anguish. Sorrowful emotions rolled like tidal waves through His heart until they broke it. Grief forced Him to prayer, and gave impetus to His cries for help. His mind was wrenched with pain that no one knew Him save the Father, and no one save Him

or the Son can describe. Since then, such is the more than magical influence of the Redeemer, suffering has been seen in a new light, and crosses have had a halo of glory that never shone about a monarch's crown!

As the Son of Man, Jesus claims and exercises the prerogatives of a judge and the functions of a king. His humanity gives Him His supreme qualifications for the seat of judgment and the throne of empire. "Ye know that He was manifested to take away sins; and in Him is no sin." The sinless man has wrestled with the sin of the world and conquered, knows by experience of His own the infirmities and weakness of the flesh, the actual conditions of the conflict in which we are engaged, and is in Himself the standard by which we are to be judged, and therefore He is the Redeemer and leader of men; and "the Father hath committed all judgment unto Him." Because He is the Son of Man He promulgates a new edict concerning the Sabbath, relieves the day of the anathema the Jews had placed upon it, and makes it the minister of the noblest perfection by converting it into the sphere and occasion of purest well-doing. Like a king, also, he dispenses pardons that men may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins; and as such He rules in His Church: for, when after His ascension He appears on behalf of His Kingdom to Stephen, Paul, and John, it is as none other than the Son of Man. The name is, then, fully vindicated and explained by the records of His life. He is our elder brother; and lifted up into fellowship with Him, every member of the race is confronted with a sympathy warm as a mother's love, lasting as the eternal hills, and hopeful as the promises of God. Nothing

that is human is alien from Christ. The normal man has raised the dignity of the entire family, sanctified the relations of society, consecrated the lowliest walks of life, made Himself the dear companion and friend of the poor and suffering, and the bright and attractive type of what we should seek to be. Jesus! Saviour! teach us that we may know Thy manhood, and help us, that, following Thee, we may be more truly men!*

The transition is easy from the consideration of the more personal name of Jesus to the official description in the statement that Jesus is the *Christ*. This, His second name, indicates His relations to the expectations and hopes of Israel, and to the unconscious prophecies of the heathen world. In the thought of the best men of that time the word "Christ" imaged a Heaven-commissioned prince, the deliverer of the oppressed people, appearing with satisfactory credentials, and conducting the men of his choice to dignity, freedom, and happiness; a prophet divinely inspired to interpret the mysteries of the past, settle the disputes of nations, respond to the profoundest questions of the human heart, lift the veil from life and illumine earth and time with the glories of Heaven and eternity. To that Jesus added the momentous fact that the Messianic goal was to be reached by suffering, humiliation, and death, and that He, the Son of the Father, was sent expressly to climb that arduous path, bearing that cross of redemption and dying thereon, in obedience to the will of God. Necessity was laid upon Him. He was appointed to the humiliation, sorrow, and death of

* "Apologetics," by Dr. A. B. Bruce, Book III. c. i. p. 337 *et seq.*

the Anointed of God. Not so much the Messianic dignity, but the Messianic service to humanity, through enduring the cross, He claimed. All that service involved, Christ felt He must be and do and suffer. All that, John declares He was and did and suffered. From the beginnings of His ministry the Nazarene was familiar with the idea of His Messiahship, as involving service and suffering, and gave no indistinct signs of the force with which it possessed Him. He is a true Hebrew in hope and faith. He reads the Law, sings the Psalms, and is fired by the Messiah hope. On His acceptance of the office of Scripture-reader in the synagogue of His native village He appropriated the Messianic words of Isaiah as descriptive of Himself. To the Samaritan woman He made known His character, and affirmed that He was the Messiah expected by the people; and such was the beauty of His life and the power of His words, that after He had been but two days in Sychar *many* said to the woman, "Now we believe not because of thy speaking, for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." And as soon as it was safe, He told His disciples of the burden of ignominy, suffering, and death that awaited Him as the Messiah.

Nor did Jesus hold back His claim or speak about it with reserve, except when political fanatics were likely to infuse their misconceptions into His words, and by using them for their own narrow and earth-born ends, frustrate the spiritual work He came to perform. No feature of the Saviour's history is more impressive than the transparent honesty with which He encountered every one who was bold enough to canvass His claims to the Messiahship set forth in the Old Testament

Scriptures. He cheerfully submitted to their interrogatory sallies, and occasionally condescended to reply to men who only questioned to deride, and inquired to betray. Deception He abhorred, and the temptation thereto shot from off His pure mind as a steel point from the polished surface of a diamond. Secresy He rarely sought in His ministry; never from fear of inquiry. Impostors court darkness. Honesty and reality love the light. Deceivers work in shade and gloom. Truth stands forth to be seen, handled, and tasted as the word of life. Charlatanry makes its fervid appeals to impossible tribunals, and asserts its claims on criteria that no one can examine. Christianity goes at once to the highest court that is in existence at the time of its appearing, and is content to stand or fall by its arbitrament. Workers in magic put out the light and then usher themselves and their legerdemain on the stage. Christ floods the whole scene with the light of His presence, and then proclaims with unshaken confidence, "Search amongst My witnesses! Look at My works! Investigate their worth! For which of them do ye stone Me? Weigh My character! Who of you convinceth Me of sin? Criticize My claims! Look into your Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and I affirm that their ungarbled testimony is clearly for Me."

John the Baptist having been in prison for several months, and becoming anxious concerning the establishment of the visible dominion of which he supposed he had been the pioneer, sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" The reply of Christ claimed the Messiah's office and character on incontest-

able grounds. "Tell John," said He, "My miracles are wrought amongst the poor in spirit and in goods. I give gladness to the desponding, and joy to the sad. I am the messenger of glad tidings to the people, and blessed is he who is not offended at the mode in which I work, or repulsed by the strongest evidences of my anointing of God."

Those works were real, objective, well-attested facts. In gathering crowds they followed the earliest portions of His ministry. Fresh from the conquest of Satan in the wilderness, the proofs of the greatness of His victory accumulated in His repeated destruction of Satan's works. The Jews admitted the reality of His miracles as they did that of the light, were irritated by some of their accidental features, as they might be with the intense heat of a burning sun, and had a rough and sensual method of accounting for the prophet's power, as dishonest men always have of shunting off the line of an uncompromising difficulty. The idea of denying that "mighty deeds did show forth themselves in Him" never entered their minds. They readily confessed His facts, but stoutly quarrelled with His logic. Nevertheless Christ always taught that His miracles were intended to prove that He was sent by the Father, and that they vindicated His claim to be the Messiah. This was His uniform judgment of the value and office of the supernatural in His ministry.

Can we allow that claim? Is that judgment just? Let us see. If God the Father sent a being here, endowed with extraordinary powers, and charged to use them in His name and for His glory, what would be the characteristics of their exercise? Our answer must depend upon the idea we have formed of God. But taking

the conception dimly beheld by Abraham and David, longed after by the heathen mind, and fully revealed in the Son of God, viz., that of a perfect, powerful, and loving Father who cares for the creatures He has made and works unceasingly for their good, we should at once conclude that such supernatural capacity would meet these five conditions in its action: it would be purely benevolent and unselfish; meek and lowly in spirit; strike at the roots of evil in man's nature; minister to the needs of the worst; and whilst compassionately alleviating the sufferings of the hour, would aim chiefly at conferring the most solid and lasting benefits upon all mankind.

Now the miracles of Jesus never bear the slightest colouring of that blackest vice of the human race—selfishness. His divine prerogative is not, for so much as a single moment, turned out of its beneficent course to gratify any personal vanity, or secure any personal pleasure. The marvel of Christ's self-restraint in the exercise of His irresistible power has impressed most candid minds. By His deeds of power He finds His way into the hearts of the blind and the lame, the leprous and the lustful, and in a hundred acts repeats the beautiful meekness and lowliness of the Incarnation. His great energies are exerted with unerring directness to annihilate those fertile sources of human misery—the worship of Satan and distrust of God, to deliver men from the sophistry of the devil's delusions, and to unite them with the Saviour and the source of eternal life. Is not this the Christ? Do not these marks of His use of power vindicate His consciousness that He was anointed and sent by the Father? If ever Christ

should come, will He do more miracles, or different miracles from what this man did?

But this was not with the Jews the final court of appeal. They possessed the oracles of God. The most distinguished privilege of their theocracy was the exclusive claim they had to the "word of the Lord." They guarded it with extreme jealousy as the *Magna Charta* of their liberties, and the imperishable glory of their decaying nationality. This was the annual register of their worthies, the album of their warriors, judges, and kings, the literature of their wisest and holiest men, and the sustenance of their spiritual life. No Scripture could compare with this. Other writings were, but this was *the* writing. Other songs were sung, but these were *the* songs. Other laws had been given, but this was *the* law. No authority could reverse its sentence. This was the judge that ended every strife. Ten thousand miracles were but as the dust in the balance if Moses were set aside in the slightest degree. Every new claimant to popular regard must meet the irrepressible inquiry, What saith the Scripture? Christ took them on their own ground. "You appeal to Moses. I take you at your word, for Moses wrote of Me. My character is his antitype. I am come to fulfil the law he announced, and the prophecies his successors declared. Search your Scriptures. Spread forth your sacred roll, and you will see My name written on innumerable pages, for there the lineaments of My life and work are distinctly portrayed. David's song is concerning Me. Will not his music soothe your irritation, and his hymnody charm away your unbelief? Isaiah foretold My appearance, My sufferings and glory, My poverty and greatness. Is not his wit-

ness of value? Micah described with geographical minuteness the place of My birth. Compare his map with the facts. Cannot that dissuade you from the rejection of My message? Daniel pointed to the figure on the clock of time at which I should arrive, and lo! at the predestined moment angels sang My advent song. Will not this suffice? Search the Scriptures, and you shall find, if you are not blind as death, that they testify of Me."*

We may talk with Matthew Arnold about "accidental coincidences," "very remarkable, certainly," though possessing little religious significance; but for the Jews this was all that could be desired. A false Christ dared not have done it. The lie would have been given him in a moment. The true Christ found by it an open door to many Jewish hearts. Renan says concerning miracles: "A single miracle at Paris before a body of competent philosophers would put an end to all doubts;" thereby most uncritically neglecting the conditions of the age in which Christ appeared, and the change which has taken place in the ultimate bar of appeal since the beginning of this era. Miracles were then untested by science because science did not exist. The competent philosopher was not born. And the question of the judges of that day was not, Is this a miracle? but, Does the miracle-worker agree with or destroy Moses and the Prophets? and Jesus took that standard, and proved that He agreed with it in every demand it made; just as He would have gone, so at least we think, before a body of Parisian philosophers, and raised a man from the dead with all the palpable-

* Cf. The Messiah-Idea: the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; in "Daily Strength for Daily Living," page 347.

ness of a professor discoursing on anatomy if only that Parisian board had then been the supreme arbiter, and had professed as much honest desire as some of the Pharisees for the discovery of, and obedience to, the truth. Jesus was the Christ. A fair interpretation of the Old, and the admission of the faintest outline of truth in the New Testament, drives off the vultures of doubt, and leaves us to enjoy the life of faith. The paradoxes of prophecy exactly fit the paradoxes of His life and ministry. The mysteries of Isaiah and David reappear in an embodied form in His character. The ages rang with the promise of His name and the prophecy of His coming. The scrolls of time pointed to Him as the desire of all nations; and when He did arrive, men so quickly read His character that they clasped hands with all the joy of a realized hope, and said, Verily, "we have found the Messias, which is being interpreted the Christ."

We must advance one step further. Jesus is the Son of God. He who could claim to be in so supreme and distinguishing a sense the Son of Man without deserving the charge of insanity or over-weening self-conceit, and to be the Messiah, the anointed Prophet-King of the Most High, without refutation from the cleverest and bitterest of His foes, need not hesitate to urge His right to be regarded as the Son of God. This is the fundamental fact in His consciousness. Directly and intuitively He knows His own sonship, and speaks and acts by the final and supreme authority of that unique relation. We must, therefore, complete the synthesis of facts grouped in the words "Jesus" and "Christ"

in another and higher designation: and what can that be but the Son of God the Father!* The circumstances of the case demand and fully justify the triple name for the Galilean Teacher, our *Lord Jesus Christ.*

Is it at this point of the discussion that we are told that the supernatural is impossible, and the idea of the Son of God in the sense contended for contrary to reason and science? We briefly reply to the statement by asserting that the denial of the supernatural is extremely unscientific. May not a gifted successor of Owen or Huxley possibly discover the higher laws of the Gospel miracles? Have not men found what they call "laws" where they least expected them? Let not the men of science assert too soon! Is there nothing occurring at this moment which if suddenly placed on the table of the Positivist would not have to be regarded as an interference with the succession of phenomena? Surely it may be so, for science is not omniscient. Supposing the supernatural is banished from Christianity, is it then gone from life? Is man only the final term in a physical series of phenomena; or is he a spiritual being? Has man no affinities for that which is above him? no yearnings for the divine and eternal? If he has, can they be fully accounted for by natural causes?

But finally, is not God free? We cannot believe in His enforced subjection to the order He has formed. If man can modify matter, why may not He? Therefore we hold to the possibility of the supernatural. Its reality

* "Apologetics," by Dr. A. B. Bruce, pp. 357, 399. "Jesus has for the Christian consciousness the religious value of God."

pervades the spiritual realm; is arrestingly seen in man's spiritual history; claimed by Jesus Christ, and necessitated to explain His life, character, and creative work in the ages. The Teacher declared to men who were seeking His life to destroy it, that God was His own Father, making Himself equal with God, and He was sentenced to death by *all* the members of the Sanhedrin, without a dissentient voice, because He claimed the incomparable and (as they judged) impossible dignity of equality with Jehovah. As from the first He boldly took that course, so to the last He persisted in it, and died a malefactor's death because He could not speak "with bated breath and whispering humbleness" about His relations to the Father, and His incomputable value as the full self-revelation and self-communication of the living God to all men. The divinity of His person is the only key that fits all the wards of the evangelic history.

Nothing but this gives the starting point and elucidates the fierce malignity of the Tempter in the wilderness; disrobes His sayings of the garb of arrogance and self-assumption; makes His "mighty" works feasible because only the blossomings of His supernatural character; interprets the charge of blasphemy upon which He was crucified; justifies the immense spiritual values attached to His life and death by Himself and His disciples; prepares us for His victorious resurrection from the garden-grave; and solves the appearance of an original type of society which under His guidance is to cleanse and ennoble every relation of human life. Jesus Himself is the most stupendous of miracles. If merely natural causes can explain Him, can illumine the grandeur of His unique

character, unravel the mysteries and paradoxes of His nature and teaching, and account for the overwhelmingly great influence He has exerted from that throne of contempt and despisal, infamy and death in Jerusalem, over these two thousand years, then we may give up the question at once. For the miracles, ordinarily so called, we would not in such a case contend for a moment. Christ is Christianity. The Gospel of the grace of God is essentially the manifestation of a Person, a divine Person, in whose existence, attributes, and actions, all religious teaching and all religious power are concentrated. Christianity does not rest on a measure but on a Man; not on a creed but a Person; not on a book but on the living God.

It is said by Stesichorus that the heroine of Grecian story, Helena, was never carried to Troy at all, and that the Greeks and Trojans fought about a mere image or figure of the far-famed beauty; so it is declared that the historians of the life of Jesus have given us not the truth as it is in Jesus, but as it was represented by their fond affections in the chamber of imagery, and that, by consequence, all the conflicts of the friends and foes of Christianity have not been about the real founder of the Kingdom of Heaven, but concerning a sublime but very incorrect image manufactured by four of the first warriors, and carried on to the field of battle by them. If that be so, we may give up our weapons and our joys together; but even such a surrender will not deliver us from all difficulty.

Robbed of the reality, there is still left us the transcendent conception of the most perfect man of all history wrought out in a biography of unutterable beauty and grace by four men supremely unfit for

such a task. This miracle is not a whit less than the former. The conception is as supernatural as the reality. It is infinitely easier to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that the Evangelists saw and heard Him for themselves, or reported what others saw and heard of Him, and wrote down facts, than that the Jewish mind in its decay created such a character, ethics and ministry, which were fixed by these writers in narratives, unparalleled for simple purity and genuine force. The light of the world cannot be a spark of man's kindling.

At noonday we do not demand proofs that the sun is in the heavens; nor when the character of the Lord Jesus fills the view of the soul, need we inquire for further witnesses to His divine Person. It is essential to the completeness of our argument that we cite this. The life is its own testimony. Three features in the Gospel-portrait of the Redeemer strike us as absolutely new; the perfect balance and equilibrium of its numerous qualities, the complete absence of defect, and the grandeur and grace of His spirit.

Every excellence of mind and heart met in Him in a transcendent degree, without any single trait gaining the least noticeable predominance. Peter embodies in his life an impulsive ardour that leaps at difficulties without measuring their force, frets against restraint, but finally softens into a patient hope that waits in trial for an unspeakable glory. John becomes the pattern of exuberant love, James of careful consistency and Paul of self-consuming zeal. But in Christ nothing is supreme but harmony. Even virtues that seem incongruous in ourselves are woven by Him into a garment of loveliness, of such uniform texture that who-

ever examines the fabric is more impressed with the pattern than with the course or colour of any single thread. He is as gentle as He is strong, as calm as He is energetic, as cosmopolitan as He is filial, as holy as He is compassionate, as mighty as He is sympathetic, and as wise as He is good. Patient as the meekest of women, He is capable of an indignation so strong and severe that haughty men quake as they feel the thongs of His sarcasm, and wince with pain as His rebukes like scorpion-stings poison their peace. He is as tranquil as an ice-bound sea, and yet urged along the ways of duty and suffering by an inextinguishable fire of enthusiasm. Lovely by a lowliness of spirit that outstrips the humblest suppliant, He blends therewith such majestic dignity as forces us to confess Him the kingliest of men. Resting in God with the simple unquestioning faith of childhood, He labours and suffers with the patience and fortitude of a hero. With unmatched self-possession and unshaken strength He steadily holds the balance of His moral and spiritual nature, so that its equilibrium is never in the slightest degree disturbed.

In vain we search for defect. The strongest microscope does not reveal a single stain. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. His youth was as sinless as His manhood was beneficent. Though born amongst Jews, and trained by Jewish parents, and educated in Jewish modes of thought, nationality left no impress on His character, no trace in His life. A villager for many years, He nevertheless escapes the errors and mistakes of the village-formed mind. Though associating with hard, captious, and disputatious men, He is as free from their faults as the angels. As in Him was no sin, so

there was no deficiency. He bade others pray for forgiveness, but never whispered such a prayer Himself. He was innocent without ignorance, generous without injustice, tearful without penitence, patient without pride, joyful without frivolity, firm without harshness, zealous without unwisdom, fond of solitude without being an ascetic, mighty in intellect without depreciating spirituality, a king in goodness without disparaging mind, as truly without fault in the sight of God as He was free from blame before the bar of men. Immeasurably superior to all men in the number and range of His moral excellences, He successfully avoided the failings which attach themselves to the best men, and thereby rendered Himself the complete revelation of the perfections of the Father, and the crown and glory of the human race.

But who shall describe the grandeur and grace of the spirit of Christ? Who shall portray the inner beauty of that harmonious life, and lay bare to the sight of mortals the source of that incomparable virtue? What foot may tread within the precincts of this holy of holies, and come forth with words lawful to utter in the hearing of men? Language fails to convey the impression made on the mind by the devout study of the Saviour's character. Reverently we stand without and hear the voice of the High Priest saying in tones of heavenly sweetness, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." "If it be possible, let this cup of suffering pass from Me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou will." And as the words sink into our hearts we feel that therein is revealed to us the formative principles of the life of Jesus, and the

first and last lesson for the sons of men. The secret of the greatest miracle of history lies in the direction of His full and unreserved surrender of Himself to God, and the fact that He won that, to us, impossible victory, with such completeness, is the strongest testimony, this side the cross, that He is the Son of the Highest.

He, the product of His times! That divine character, the offspring of the age, and such an age! Why, brethren, if we combine in one all the notable excellences of His most distinguished predecessors and contemporaries, of David and Isaiah, of Shammai and Hillel, Nicodemus and Gamaliel, and reproduce them in one person, we are still as far from realizing this prototype of humanity as the chemist is from creating a living man by shaking together hydrogen and oxygen, phosphorus and iron, and the other elements found in the human body! Jesus is not the Son of Judaism, but of God. The fragrance and aroma of His name are not wafted from the philosophical schools of Alexandria, but from the land that is afar off, and the home of the holiest and best. His intellectual parentage is not to be discovered in the "great soul of Philo," but in the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. The full-orbed glory of His character is not the radiance of myriad nebulæ gathered into a solitary star, but the brilliance of the central Sun! Verily, He is the Incarnate Word, God over all, blessed for ever!

We now inquire concerning the plan of this Person. John wrote his Gospel that men might believe, and that believing, they might have life. This word "life" strikes our key-note for all accurate investigations of

the plan of Jesus, and is the echo of the thought of Christ expressed in the exposition He gave of His intentions to His querulous enemies when He said, contrasting himself with other teachers, "I am come that men may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

Nor do we depend for this information exclusively upon the author of the fourth Gospel. Matthew delineates the main features of this plan quite as vividly and only less frequently than John. True, the Synoptics represent Jesus as the preacher of "the Kingdom of God," describe His idea of its character as spiritual and universal, its source as in "the grace" of God, and of its accessibility to the worst, even to those dead in trespasses and in sins. Words and even ideas differ: but the purpose and method and spirit of the Founder of the Kingdom and of the Mediator of life to men are one and the same in the Synoptics and in John. Writing for Jews, Matthew adopts Jewish modes of thought, and on a natural and obvious principle, selects those sayings of Jesus which were cast in a Jewish mould, but when we have separated the form from the substance, the drapery from the figure, we instantly come face to face with the same dominant idea of life—life from God through Christ and life under the rule of God. Luke describes the universal sweep of the mission of Christ and shows that He compassed the interests of all men, independently of national considerations. Mark illumines the means and instruments adopted by Christ in the accomplishment of the work He had undertaken, by describing the effusions of His healing power and grace upon the diseased and suffering. The Acts of the Apostles, the

Epistles of Paul and John, contribute in broadening the basis on which the conclusion rests that Christ Jesus regarded the spiritual life of man as rooted in Himself, and His sole work to render it available to all who were willing to receive it.

Such was His aim from the first; and His ideas concerning it were as definite and clear at the outset as at the close of His ministry; nor did He ever waver in His judgment of its importance, doubt its triumph, modify its details, or materially change His method of action in seeking its execution. It was His "Father's business" which roused the ardour of His youth, and satisfied the consecration of His manhood. The Prophet of the village moves along the same grooves as the famous and eagerly-sought Teacher of the metropolis. Starting with the declaration that He was the friend of the meek and of the poor, He finished by sacrificing His life for the salvation of the world. Never does He falter or change. He will not retract though all Jerusalem be against Him, for he is "One who brings a mind not to be changed by place or time." He is the "unconquerable will and courage never to submit or yield, and what is else, not to be overcome." One supreme purpose is developed in His ministry, and only one, though its forms are various, and the means of its unveiling different at different times.

It has been suggested that circumstances were His master, shaped His arrangements, and governed His destiny. The records not only do not support the statement, they positively contradict it. His hour was as fixed as His plan, and He saw the exact time when the latter would be perfected by His death, and spake and acted as one who knew that men and devils com-

bined in vain to destroy Him till that time arrived. What! He begin as a political enthusiast, and when thwarted by the people turn spiritual teacher! Why nothing is more opposed to the evidence; no dream is so manifestly visionary and self-destructive. His first sermon is an overwhelming refutation of so disparaging and baseless an insinuation. He close His career with the excitement of a fanatic, and the folly of an amiable but miscalculating revolutionist! Why nothing could be more uncritical in interpretation, more absurdly false! He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many, and He left us having made a sacrifice of Himself in a spirit of dignified repose, calm fortitude, and uncomplaining love which has made Him the world's ideal of suffering greatness ever since.

To give life, then, was His plan, always His plan. There is nothing in the account of Christ which justifies the assertion that His chief work was to offer a pattern of integrity, goodness, and submission to the will of Heaven. That is as insufficient as if we were to omit both head and heart in a scientific description of man. It is merely travestying the documents we ought to elucidate to say with Renan that Jesus is the founder of a society of free intelligences, without any fixed ideas and special modes of action; and it is certain that we *may* ignore some of the fundamental truths of Christianity if we rest satisfied with the picture of Christ as a legislator establishing a new theocracy and issuing His edicts of universal love, forgiveness, and mercy.

The Saviour started from the fact of the spiritual death of men, and His gospel became necessarily the

proclamation of spiritual life. He knew that He was not come to those who were whole, but to the sick; that His was a physician's office, and a physician's power. He had not to teach the perfect, but to deliver the fallen, unite the soul to God, give it the gladness of filial joy in His presence, and the strength and purity of conformity to His character. His unalterable conviction of man was that he has lost himself, his God, his way in life, and his vision of eternity; and His inflexible purpose was to seek him out in the mazes of sin in which he had wandered, and give him salvation in God. Life, therefore, according to the plan of Jesus, primarily means the restoration of man to God the Father in trust and love, growing into joyful communion with Him, and resulting in an increasing assimilation to His adorable nature, and comprises, in the experience of the soul, the awakening of faith and penitence, the forgiveness of sins, the delight and strength of "rest in the Lord," the quickening of conscience, the feast of divine love, the fruits of holiness and philanthropy, and an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

Christ came to give that life, and to give it not to one here and another there, but to myriads who should form the living nucleus of a new society which should gather into itself all who are "of the truth," and finally become as comprehensive as the family of man. Such a conception is itself worthy of a God. Think you, was that learned from Judas the Galilean who led a bootless insurrection against the Roman power during the boyhood of Jesus? Did the doctors of the Law give Him His magnificent plan? Will natural causes sufficiently explain that phenomenon?

Look at it closely! Here is a Syrian peasant, trained amid the "cribbed and confined" notions of a retired village, rarely brought near the skirts of a lofty civilization, uneducated in the lore of the schools, and unacquainted with politics other than Jewish, not yet thirty years of age, but producing as His purpose in life the uplifting of the world from its degradation and decay, the infusion of new moral force into the hearts of men, the eradication of vices strong in their antiquity and universal in their ramifications, the birth of virtues hitherto impossible to man, the sway of benevolence and bliss, and all this to be accomplished without the patronage of statesmen, the learning of scholars, or the genius of philosophers, and by means, first, of the attractions of His cross and sacrifice, and secondly, of the power of that spiritual life He has put in the possession of His few disciples. Is that new type of legislation a miracle or is it not? Does not that plan glorify the person? Is not the Godhood of the person necessary to solve the mystery of the plan? Verily God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. The idea of such a work lifts the Saviour as far above the wisest and best of mankind as God Himself is above us.

But has this extraordinary plan been accomplished in whole or in part, or is it merely a Utopia whose brilliance first pleased and then deluded the credulity of men? The history of the Church and the present condition of Christendom supply the answer. The annals of the Christian society are but the lengthened glory of His power, and the "foundation of Christendom is Christ." He gives life, and life is always its

own witness. It is above all logic, and free of all reasoning processes. Though its secrets answer no man's call, its reality all confess. Creation is alive, and the play of its life bathes the flowers with perfume and clothes them with grace, decks the green earth's sod and fills the air with the warbled song of merry choristers, gilds the crests of spreading landscapes with glory and floods their spaces with loveliness, beams out in the radiance of suns and flashes in the light of stars, tips the brow of the mountains with grandeur, and covers the vales with ears of corn that grow golden at the bidding of the sun and rattle in the autumn breeze. Life is the electric fire which is so freely coursing around us, conducting messages of wisdom to our hearts, banishing our doubts by its intensity, and fitting us to praise Him who is its unfailing source. In its freshness and fulness is the charm of youth, the tranquil attractions of home, and the unfading pleasures of Heaven. Verily, of all pleasant things, none is more so than for the eyes to behold the teeming abundance of life, and the heart to feel the impulses of its throbbing force; and of all useless acts none could surpass that of constructing arguments to prove its presence and vindicate its reality.

In like manner the spiritual life bestowed by Christ is always its own competent proof. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, and this is the witness that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." The man who is alive from the dead has a record in his heart which he rarely misinterprets and never mistrusts, for its testimony is clearer than the wisest reasonings of men, and stronger than all the books or evidence ever written. Says Dr.

South, "To feel a thing in one's self is the surest way of knowing it," and this is the knowledge of which he boasts and in whose certainty he confides. With the demons of selfishness cast out of him, with a pure satisfaction for his daily feast, with the constraining love of Christ in his heart, and the Holy Ghost perfecting his fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light, he feels that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus, and in the new creation itself has an invincible weapon to ward off every assailant of the reality of his divine Lord.

And this individual is a specimen of what Jesus is able to do for all men, and has been doing for thousands "since the day of his showing unto Israel." The Church of Jerusalem in the first century was full of His life, and though many defects and vices have stained the annals of the universal Church's history, yet we are warranted in saying that by means of that Church Jesus is still at the heart of all that is good, and true, and self-denying in the Christendom of to-day. Modern civilization, so far as it is virtuous, and philanthropic, and high-principled, was born in the stable at Bethlehem, and reared in the land of Palestine. The secondary consequences of the Christian religion have penetrated far beyond the boundaries prescribed by ecclesiastics, and not a few who reject the Christian name owe their best treasures to the Nazarene's hand. Society, stricken with moral paralysis, is touched by the Physician, and though made whole and rejoicing in the exhilarating pulsations of a newer life, is yet, like the man at the pool of Bethesda, unaware from whence the healing comes. Christianity is in the air, and men breathe it and are braced for duty and trial

by it, unconsciously as children inhale the oxygen of the atmosphere without knowing its relation to their continuous life. Christ Jesus has gone forth with His blessing to the home of the poor and the mansion of the rich, has lightened the burden of the oppressed and multiplied the joys of the glad, sustained the heart of the bereaved and filled with praise the living, woven His name into our literature, and toned the talk of the street, sanctified our science and corrected our philosophy; prepared light for youth, power for manhood, and comfort for old age, raised woman from the slave to the equal of man, ennobled character and transformed nations, eradicated some vices and limited the growth and area of others, begotten new virtues and given to all virtue a grace and attraction the disciples of Zeno and Seneca never saw. Is this an age of induction? Are we told to collect our facts? Give us induction! We crave no more. By its results we will abide. For if anything under the sun can stand that test it is the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

The plan of Christ is then largely an accomplished fact, but not entirely so. The life spreads and multiplies, but death abounds notwithstanding. The golden age of Christianity is yet to come. The "world's future" will be more glorious than its past or present. Redemption is not an isolated and incomplete act, but a continuous and ever-perfecting work of the Redeemer of Men. We are not orphaned, nor can we be. He is an ever-living Comforter. The divine King is not dead, nor has He left the work of His hands. What He has been to His Church, He will be for all coming time. He is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. Let us not fear, but hold fast the beginning of our

confidence to the end. The leaven works secretly but surely. Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Though our enemies come in as a flood, and make sad havoc with the Church of the Lord Jesus, we will not, we dare not despair. The living Redeemer is our defence and our victory, and He will assuredly render all opposition contributory to the more secure accomplishment of His final purpose. I have seen the delicate and fragile flower called the Nomaphila closing its blue and white tinted leaves amid the thickening shades of evening, and I have found in the sparkling sunlight of morning a larger development and a softer beauty ; so the Church of the Saviour may veil her glories before her foes, and in fear conceal her treasures, but at morning-time it shall be light, and then in ampler proportions and with diviner grace shall she appear the fairest and loveliest of all the offspring of God.

Reviewing the whole statement, the appropriateness of the divine Person to the perfect Plan, and of the plan to the person, and of His resurrection to both, and of the subsequent changes in the condition of humanity to these three facts, must strike every mind and form a consolidated and irrefutable argument. Fitness reigns supreme. Take the plan without the supernatural character, and "chaos and old night" come back nine times darker and more chaotic than ever. Accept the person and deny His purpose, and the disorder is only less great. Every mode of viewing the subject which rejects either element is confused, illogical, and inconclusive. The historic portraiture is a living organism of which the supernatural is the

spinal column, and the life-giving plan the direction along which it acts. Logical and moral consistency compels us to refuse any rudiment of certainty which eliminates either the nervous centre or the channels of its operations. The modern historians of Christ must be narrowly watched, for it is both unjust and uncritical to analyze the Gospels, precipitate the rudimentary ideas, and then take hold of one and bear it aloft as though it were the synthesis of the whole. Analysis is necessary and is useful, for we never can have more than imperfect notions of Christ, and these examinations will tend to make each notion more distinct; but when the process of uniting all the parts together begins, it is unscientific and base to leave behind even the least of the principal elements. But worse than this is the modern critical chemistry. Obtaining a certain reagent, its professors draw the character of Christ they desire, having left in solution all the facts which testify to the supernatural. Against this procedure we protest, as well in the name of reason as of Scripture, for these things were written, the *whole* of them, that we may believe not only that there was a Jesus and that He was a sort of Messiah, but also that He was the Son of God, and that believing we may have life in His name.

We rejoice, therefore, to be assured again that the Gospel does not demand the death of reason in offering itself to the acceptance of man, but boldly appeals to his judgment, simply requiring that he shall judge righteously and with a desire to discover the will of God. Christianity is not the foster-mother of credulity. Christ is not the Lord of unreason. Intelligence confirms our faith and justifies our hope. Examina-

tion reveals the solidity of the rock on which we build, and shows that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Inquiry tests the validity of the Gospel facts, and proves that we have not followed a cunningly-devised fable in trusting to the power and looking for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know *whom* we have believed, how divinely strong, how humanly tender, and we are persuaded that He is able and that He intends to keep those sacred interests we have committed to Him till the day of judgment.

Christ is our life, and the world's only hope of complete regeneration. No need of the sons of men at this moment is so pressing as that of spiritual life, and no want of the Church so obvious as that of more of the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Must we not confess this? Sin abounds. Our Christian lives are poor and low and selfish, and in every way too much unlike our Lord's. Death is holding high carnival in the world, and secretly plucking some of the loveliest flowers of the Church. Toiling in the towns and villages of our land, or groping in the dense darkness of heathenism abroad, are millions who are perishing for lack of the knowledge of Christ, and yet, *you* believe, I believe, there is an overflowing abundance of life for them in Him and only in Him! Material progress attains its climax without raising the moral nature of man. Money rolls in upon us with unprecedented fulness, but does not drive out sin. Ritualism battens upon the evils of a sensuous age, and yet men do not live. Theories of brotherhood, the direct offspring of Christianity, prove their powerlessness in heartrending facts, when without Christ. Wise as the age is, and no age ever was wiser, it cannot dispense with Jesus.

Strong as men are in their union—and when were they stronger?—they are but chaff before the wind without His arm for their defence. Self-reliant as they are—and could they be more so?—their valour and courage are a broken staff in the night of trial without the words and help of the Son of God.

Brothers, with a faith that knows no fear, and a boldness that does not bate a jot of steadfastness to truth, and a tenderness born at the cross, that weeps o'er the self-wrought woes of men, let us go forth hazarding our lives to tell them of the love and sacrifice of the Redeemer of the world. What are we doing to convey this treasure to the hearts and homes of our needy brethren for whom Christ died? Permit me, for Jesus' sake, to urge the question. Do we care for men as our Saviour did? Is our earnestness sincere, and our fervour born of God? Is there an enthusiasm of Christ burning within us with such intensity as to reduce to ashes our envy and selfishness, and, lifting us above the rule of mere routine, make us stand forth as living witnesses for Him? Does the spell of His matchless love hold us to Himself, and cause to ring in our ears amid the surging billows of life, in the church and in the home, in the study and in the market, the memorable truth, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price"? Can we say to this talking age as we look into our motives and examine the character of our acts, "We do not only speak great things, we live them," and do men respond to our words with a force that shows their doubt is vanquished, "The Lord is risen indeed, see how these Christians live and love"? We have great interests committed to our charge; let us not be recreant to our

trust. Powerful memories urge our activity, memories of fathers and mothers now before the throne. Let us not resist their influence. Bright visions allure us. Quickly let us march towards our goal. The Lord Jesus is still with us to assure us that all power is given unto Him both in Heaven and earth. Let us not fear, but preach the gospel of His love to every creature, and pray day by day that His Kingdom may come, and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

O Son of Man! we, beholding Thy glory and Thy power, are ashamed and penitent for the weakness and folly of our lives, but looking up to Thy perfections and pity, cherish the hope that Thou wilt make us more manly, truthful, strong, and good! Anointed Messiah, teach us that we may comprehend the significance of the past, and help us that we may use it to "finest issues" in the work of the present! Son of God, we cling to Thee as the dearest possession of our hearts, and fervently trust that Thou wilt raise us to be partakers of Thy divine nature! Gracious and life-giving Lord, visit Thy Church in all Thy fulness; fire her sons and daughters with Thy sacred enthusiasm that they may more earnestly serve, and more worthily magnify Thy holy name. "Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O prince of all the Kings of the earth; put on the visible robes of Thy imperial majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which Thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee, for now the voice of Thy bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed."

THE FIFTH GOSPEL.

"The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes."—JOHN ix. 30.

NO reader of this graphic story is surprised at the indignant astonishment with which this healed man, consciously enjoying the benefit of Christ's work, repels the malignant attack upon the character of his gracious and beneficent Physician. Nothing was more likely than his scorn; nothing more natural than his flashing anger. A victim of chronic blindness through all his years, he had been cut off till now from thousands of the most serene and thrilling pleasures of existence. After a childhood spent in puzzling darkness, he passed into a youth of perplexing and thickening gloom; and when manhood's years came upon him they were clouded by the deprivation of one of man's noblest gifts and the absence of one of his most useful instruments; but lo! just as he is settling into fixed hopelessness, unexpectedly, swiftly, without any surgical operation, and by more than earthly magic, he is made to see the world of nature and of man. How could he do anything else than count it an incredible thing that those whom he had been taught to regard as the wisest thinkers and shrewdest observers of the land, should try to trace to any other than a divine fountain the stream which had washed

the darkening film from his long-closed eyes? Marvel indeed it was that a man *born* blind, and blind through so many years, should ever come to see; but greater marvel still, that when he actually stood with open and delighted gaze before men pretending to sense and discernment, they should betray such a lively distrust of undeniable facts, and so keen a suspicion of the conclusions to which those facts unmistakably pointed. "Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes."

That man, uttering his bewilderment, is not wholly unlike some of us, gazing in our wonder on the modern critics of Christianity and rejectors of the Lord Jesus Christ. No sooner did we feel and know that we had passed out of the depressing darkness of sin and loss and wrong, into the marvellous light of pardon and true holiness, than we were filled with amazement that all men did not confess and adore the wonderful person who had so surprisingly enriched us. Nor has our astonishment ceased with enlarging experience and widening knowledge. Enjoying a sweet reconcilement to God, our Father, by Christ His Son; receiving in our *present* lives "strong consolations" and joy-filling powers; encouraged to cherish hopes of a *future* blessedness of being, that, whether true or false, profoundly cheer us and elevate and purify our aims; and assured beyond doubt that all this blessing is due to Christ, we are more than ever astonished that any man should deny His power and grace, and even unwittingly pour discredit on Him who is the source and cause of the living change. We do not condemn: we mourn. We do not denounce, but we do say it is unaccountably strange that the Lord Jesus should be doing amongst

men to-day such marvellous works as we know He is, and men of proved ability and honesty of purpose should find no better occupation than disparaging His work and rejecting His claims. If a thousand men, looking straight at the sun in mid-day should declare it was mid-night, we should not be more astonished. "Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes."

But is this surprise of ours justifiable? Is Christ Jesus so evidently at work in modern society as to warrant our astonishment and vindicate our indignation? Are there any facts within hand-reach, as plainly and as easily verifiable as the fact of the healing of this blind man? Have we any worthy materials to offer to the sharpened judgment, acute observation, and scientific methods of these objectors to the Christianity of the Gospels? Have we anything beside authority and tradition on which to stand?

They say we have not. They tell us Christianity is dead. That it is still here, they admit. It lingers; but like a limb smitten with paralysis, it dangles at the side of a living and progressive society, clothed in ancient and elegant drapery, but utterly useless, since it is no longer an instrument of wide sweep and resistless power, moving at the bid of an intelligent Will. The world is leaving it behind as an anterior and antiquated stage of thought and action, just as the mature man puts aside the childish things of his early years. "Christianity," cries one of the leaders of this school of thought, "Christianity has been tried and failed; to-day that failure is too patent."* It holds its place

* John Morley's "Critical Miscellanies," pp. 190, 191. This receives a welcome qualification in the statement, "the *religion* of

not by what it *is*, but by what is *was;* not by what it can do now, but by what it did centuries ago; not by any living service it is able to render suffering and struggling men to-day, but by what it gave to our predecessors ages since. The old well is here, and the water is in it; but the water is dead and useless, and the well had better be covered up lest anyone should stumble in and perish. The machinery of Christianity is about us, but it is not worked, or if worked it gives no products of any marketable value. It has been superseded by other and better apparatus; but it stands in the factory of the world because the owner has plenty of capital and too much regard for the machine that produced the capital to take it down and sell it for old iron. In short, Christianity is dead; and would be buried out of sight, only that a few mistaken or selfish men robe it in the garments of the living, and by sheer strength of incontinent affirmation, manage to get credulous outsiders to declare that it has some life in it after all; or, in the terribly incisive and mournful summary of a philosopher, now deceased a few years—Our Christ is a dead Christ; all our saints are dead men; our miracles were wrought ages long gone by; our theology is a dead science, and we are doomed to look *back* for all our inspiration.*

Christ remains to be tried." It is, therefore, of some special forms of Christianity the assertions are made, rather than of the Christianity of the Great Forty Years. See also "Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism," by the Duke of Somerset. The author of "Natural Religion" says: "When a religion such as Christianity loses its hold after having possessed the minds of men for centuries, as a matter of course a sort of phantom of it will haunt the earth for a time," p. 115.

* Buckle. Cf. Buchanan's "Wandering Jew," and the controversy in the *Daily Chronicle*, at the beginning of 1893, on "Is Christianity played out?"

Now is that a fair statement of *all* the facts of the case? Does that describe things as they really are? Is it even approximately a true account of the condition of Christianity in our own country and over the wide earth?

I am eager to admit that there is much *apparent* if not real ground for the painful indictment that Christianity is a failure, and may pass away from amongst existing agencies. Vicissitude is stamped on all earthly things; and if it does not mark the Gospel of Christ, there must be strong reason for its absence. Dynasties rooted deep in centuries of strength pass away like the leaves of autumn; if the rule of Christ does not submit to this law, it must be because it is founded on a higher and more enduring statute. Besides the progress of the kingdom is dishearteningly slow. Christian men fall far short of the divine ideal of their Lord. His "counsels of perfection" are woefully disregarded by many of His followers. His principles receive but a partial and inadequate application. The so-called Christian world in too many cases shows a good deal of the "world," and not much of the "Christian." Society wears the name and mocks the authority of the Eternal King. Love of ease, and impatience of trouble, disinclination to self-sacrifice and justice, begotten of our increasing material wealth, penetrate and enfeeble the Church. The chariot of the King is clogged and hindered, by the spreading branches of superstition, thrown in honour of the Monarch Himself, across His path, but not less really blocking His way. We know it, we grieve over it, and we sigh and pray for a baptism in the Holy Ghost, so that we may have a fuller and richer life.

But when the largest admissions of partial degeneracy and feebleness have been frankly made, the question still returns upon us, is Christ so thoroughly dead as these men say? Is Christ Jesus merely a beautiful reminiscence, a grand significant historic figure filling the halls of the storied past with His benign presence, but wholly absent from us to-day? Does death still hold Him in its icy and relentless grip?

If it be so, my brethren, then there is no Gospel for men at all. A Gospel that is all history and nothing else is no Gospel whatever to living and suffering men. To point agonizing and rest-seeking souls to a long line of illustrious achievements running through eighteen centuries, like a ray of brilliant light illuminating all it touches, and meanwhile to minister no *present* help and sympathy is worse than offering shipwrecked sailors a painted ship, or frost-bitten and hungry travellers a painted fire and feast. What avails the triumph over ancient paganism if we are to be defeated in every fight with sin and vice! The overthrow of heathen sensuality in the Roman empire; what is it more than a splendid theme for school-boy declamation on a prize day, and as tantalizing as it is splendid, if we are doomed to be swallowed up by the sensuality that beats with its desolating waves around us! To have cast out the barbarities of two thousand years, to have trampled underfoot the hoary superstitions and follies of centuries, to have routed the foe with incredible loss in a hundred fights; what boots it if we who wield the sword to-day have no real and invisible Captain surely leading us to victory; if the hero of those past triumphs has lost His power and is incapable

of doing anything for you and me, for our nation and race! My only child is dying of a fever. Every known resource has been employed without success. I appeal to you for help, and you tell me of a physician who wrought marvellous cures two centuries ago, but who died without either revealing his secret or leaving a successor. A house is on fire, the goods are being destroyed, life is imperilled, and in your ardent sympathy you forward to the frightened inmates a report of the way in which the captain of the fire brigade put out a great fire in Tooley Street, with an excursus of your own on how fires were extinguished in old Rome. Here are evils fearful and dense, care, and sorrow, and sin; the noiseless but intense warfare is being waged now, and you have no other cheer for the wearied soldiers than that they are without a leader and an inspiration, and must perforce fight their foes in their own strength and bear their burdens as best they can. A Gospel that is merely a history is no more a real Gospel for men such as we are, than the monument in King William Street is the present ruler of England.

From such a state of blank hopelessness, concerning ourselves and our destiny, it is very certain, the Scriptures were meant to save us. The original documents of Christianity create and sustain an expectation of a work of Christ, as actual, present, and thorough-going for every age as for those memorable years in which the Incarnate Word was seen amongst men full of grace and truth. They tell of Christ still at the heart of all human progress; perfecting men by His discipline, soothing them in their sorrow, stirring and satisfying their purest aspirations, and persistently warring

against all that is inhuman and godless. The Christ of the cross is the Christ of the resurrection. The same Jesus who weeps, and prays, and suffers in Gethsemane, blesses and commands on Olivet, and in words that embrace all times as well as all nations, describes the work His followers are to do, the sphere in which it is to be done and the inspiration and hope that will maintain them in doing it. Go and preach the Gospel, and lo! I am with you even unto the end of the world. He frankly told His disciples He was going to leave them. He as clearly said He should come again. Everywhere He speaks like one who has commenced a work He will not leave till it is finished, and laid the foundation of a kingdom that knows no end.

The Christians of the first Church, with such teaching still ringing in their ears, clung with unquivering tenacity to the fact that Christ was still alive. They believed it. They rejoiced in it. They lived upon it and by it. They preached it, and died like exulting heroes, witnessing to the immense strength the fact had over them. All through the "Acts of the Apostles" it is the living as well as the risen Christ who speaks and leads; indeed, the book is avowedly written to continue the biography of that same Jesus, the beginning of whose works and words formed the subject of Luke's Gospel. And since those works never ceased, the book of the Acts has no finish. It could not have. It breaks off abruptly because the facts of which it treats, the doings of the living Christ, have been occurring from that day to this without interruption. It tells a fragment of the story of an endless life. It chronicles a

few of the earlier facts of an interminable history. Paul startled Festus by affirming that Jesus Christ had not merely risen from the dead, but was still alive, alive then. Gone from their midst, yet He appears in the presence of God for them, sends the Comforter to them, and pours into their hearts in a tide of love all the familiar tenderness, boundless compassion, and inspiring grace of His own divine nature. He has ascended to His Father and to our Father, to His God and our God. He has left us, but only that He may complete from His throne in the Heavens the glorious work He commenced in His brief ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem. He is not visible to us, but He is as loving and as strong, as pitiful and as good to-day as he was to Peter and John, Martha and Mary, in the yesterday of the evangelical record. He was the same here, always the same, and He went up on high unchanged and unchangeable. He is the King of all the ages, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. If Christ be not living, and His work not actual and present, then not only have we no Gospel, but we have no reliable Scripture.

These things, however, will be trifles light as air in the scales of the criticism of this scientific age. The urgent needs of men and the birth of this larger hope cannot count for much in a time which rigorously demands and will have verification. Huxley says: "The man of science has learnt to believe in justification by verification." Exactly! and so has the Christian. We verify, indeed we are always verifying, according to that fundamental maxim which

enjoins us to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." It is no new thing to us to believe in justification by verification. Experience is always verifying truth, and it is because the verification is so broad, and deep, and full that we are so steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we *know* that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. There are other laboratories surely than those of the physicist. Every verification is not made with the scalpel and crucible. Dots of animated jelly and invisible bits of protoplasmic substance are not the only veritable phenomena, or else we must bar the doors to many wide and fruitful domains of thought and experience, besides those opened to us in Christianity. The positive *method* is the Christian method. Does the chemist deal with facts in a free and independent way, unhampered by authority and tradition? So do we. Does the physicist bring different forces together, and after various trials, produce by them a certain result? So do we. Are operations conducted for them in the workshop of Nature? So they are for us in the field of Human Nature. In fact every day we are dealing with facts as verifiable as any deduction of Science, as obviously real as any precipitate of the chemist. The present and actual work of the Lord Jesus, while affording us much that is beyond our comprehension, and that inspires our reverence and awe, yet supplies us with facts as real, as tangible, and as verifiable, as extensive and as unique, as rich in their quality and as important in their relations, as any that are offered to the acuteness and the investigation of men. Christianity is not merely based on facts—

the facts recorded in the four Gospels—but Christ, who is Christianity alive, is this very day writing in Christ-like facts a fifth Gospel before our very eyes and in our hearts.

Beginning with some of the most vivid and abundant materials contained in this latest gospel, let us cite the obvious and well-attested fact that *the Lord Jesus is now giving meaning, and purpose, and purity to lives that were utterly without them.* The reality of religious conversion is as indisputable now as ever, and as evident as the ebb and flow of the tides. Men are radically and really changed, swept out of all their past passions and pursuits, and set with the entire force of a living consecration to a new and purer destiny. The transformation goes on before our eyes in every living Church, in every city and town, and it verifies itself in the choice of a new career, the adoption of a new purpose, and the living a new life. The godless profligate is self-restrained and chaste. The blasphemer of yesterday prays to-day. Dissolute and selfish a short while since, now he is pure and full of solicitude for others. Ready to do any villainy that gave fair promise of secresy then, now he wars against evil in thought and counts himself worthy of heaviest censure if he does not succeed. Before, he was grasping, hard as a stone, reeking with foulness, leading a life of "naked secularity"; now he is generous, tender-hearted, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the courageous champion of neglected truths and despised ideals. Search we far or near yet we do not find language more squarely fitting into the facts than those used for the

conversions of the first century. "He is in Christ," "He is a new creature," "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

In these recent conversions we admit there is not the suddenness of Pentecost, nor the blinding glare that shot on the astonished pilgrim to Damascus, but there is (however we may phrase it) the same repentance towards God, the same faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, the same abhorrence of and separation from the evil past, the same clear witness to the divine character of the agent of the change and the same characteristic moral results. Occasionally, and owing to the darkness of the previous life, this spiritual chemistry flashes across our view like the brilliant glare of a magnesium light in the gloomy caverns of a deep mine; but ordinarily its operations are viewless as the air, noiseless as the swiftly marching light, yet evidencing themselves in the new meaning given to existence, the new attachments for the heart and the newly-woven garment of purity which graces and adorns the life. Not more certainly is the chemist, led on by Faraday and Perkin, extracting the most fascinating and fashionable colours now in use from aniline, a product from the mere refuse in the coal-tar retort, than Christ Jesus is now, as of old, making living saints out of those who were thieves and covetous, drunkards and revellers, and the like; robing in beautiful deed and chivalrous service, men and women who were listlessly and aimlessly drifting through a monotonous and wearisome existence; suffusing with a sweet restfulness and hallowing calm disappointed and fevered hunters after pleasure, and filling meaningless lives with thoughts of God and truth, of the soul and duty,

and with useful service and holy deed. From Him new light has flashed into the understanding and given a fresh and helpful interpretation to life, its cares, its mysteries, its duties, and its joys; by Him a new rule has been imposed on the conscience He has pacified by His sacrifice; through Him a new enthusiasm kindles the passions into flame, and in Him is offered to the heart a new object of worship and adoring love. Behold He has made all things new, and the evidences of His quickening power are as actual, positive, ascertainable, and verifiable, as was the sight of the once blind man.

Another fact almost, if not quite, as obvious and as widespread, is that *Christ is gladdening the hearts and gilding the prospects of the toiling poor.* It is one of the misfortunes of our growing wealth that it does not of itself and as a matter of course diminish the evils of pauperism and remove the poor and destitute out of the land. Squalid tenements, alleys swarming with sordid, care-worn, and brutalized men, women, and children, still disfigure our manufacturing capitals, and dim the brightness of our civilization. "When goods are increased, they are increased that eat them"; and the millions toil and die, uncheered by the light of knowledge, and unsatisfied with the material rewards of their labour: whilst in a thousand cases moral dignity and elevation of character are sacrificed to the insatiable Moloch of industrial progress.*

But fact it is, whatever we may make of it, that even poverty, due as it is so often to apathy or wickedness, to greed and oppression, to unjust legal, commercial,

* Lecky. "History of European Morals."

and social conditions, yet is, in the esteem of hundreds, a different thing because of their faith in One who, Himself the purest and noblest of beings, endured its keen pressure with such unruffled patience and uncomplaining meekness. There are thousands at this very hour treading the flinty path with bleeding feet, but with a smiling face, a song on their lips and real joy in their hearts as they journey up its jagged slopes, because they see the blood-stained footprints of Jesus along that very road. They have not lost their poverty, but it has lost its sting. Their means are not less straitened, but the evil is stripped of its terrors and rendered incapable of eating out beautiful feeling, fervent trust in God, and sympathy with all that is true and good. The path of the poor is welcome as the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, since they have known that He who loves them so tenderly, and was Himself so loved of the Eternal Father, trod every inch of it, and trod it too for them and their salvation.

"Incredible!" says one, "why should the mere circumstance that Jesus was a poor toiling working man, labouring in order to live, handling tools as we handle them now, make work welcome, poverty endurable, and even a scant cupboard an incitement to faith and industry?" *Why* it is so, I stay not now to answer, but I must reiterate the fact. The poor man finds that his lot is not so hard, that the flint does not cut so deeply, or the wound is sooner healed, because his living and loving Lord, whose presence is now his joy, went along that very path. Two men live in the same court, work at the same factory, get the same wages, have the same sort of room, yet one is fretting and chafing against the limits of his condition, and always

seeking his own things, whilst the other is calm and tranquil, earnest in doing a little good, and cheered with a good hope, through grace, of eternal life. Two wives live in the same street, have the same means, and the same needs; one neglects her house and her children, perpetually rebels against her lot, and flies for excitement to ardent spirits; the other rises out of her poverty, and, not forgetting the claims of home, goes forth to minister to those who need the riches of the faith of Christ, and the consolations of His Gospel. This is not theory, but experience; it is not speculation, but fact. It is what Christ Jesus is doing now amongst the poor. I have seen it in the same way and with the same palpableness that I have seen a chemical experiment in the lecture-room of Professor Williamson at University College!

And are those unique consolations restricted to those who have to war with material and physical difficulties? By no means: for if our Lord had left the *sorrowful and disconsolate, the weak and suffering, the afflicted and dying, without His gracious benediction*, myriads who feel most acutely their need of Him, would have remained altogether unblest, and the Gospel of our day would certainly have lacked one of the prime elements of that of the days of His flesh. No religion is complete without the well-founded message, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God"; and no inspiration surmounts every difficulty till it bursts forth in the glowing trust and hope of the twenty-third psalm. Spiritual instruction is not enough.

Man has deeper necessities than those of the intellect, and even the addition of those cardinal blessings for the

conscience, pardon and purity, will not supply all our need, since there are left wide realms of sympathy and feeling with cravings that must be satisfied. Many yearn for the God of "strong consolations," who can chase away care with His word, and sustain the weary with His arm, dry the tear of sorrow, and heal the wound of sin, fortify the heart against temptation, and breathe solace into the spirit of the sad, soothe the pillow of the dying, and animate with everlasting hopes the bereaved. The science of human progress proclaims "the survival of the fittest," and sends the weakest to the wall; the weak man wants to know what God does with him, with the weak and diseased, the heirs of great and abiding troubles, the shattered in strength, and the faltering in purpose. Ah! Christ Jesus, *we* know who conquers here. Ever dost Thou prove Thy sole sovereignty as the Prince of joy and blessedness in the populous kingdom of tribulation, and Thine unmatched efficacy as a Son of Consolation in the myriad homes of sorrow. Here all men confess Thou hast no peer; for even those who have refused to bow before Thee as the Son of the Highest, have been kindled into faith and love as they beheld Thy far-reaching sympathies, and received Thy bountiful and compassionate help. Borne into the thick of human sorrows, with face marred and heart broken more than any man's, Thou seemest nearer to us than our very grief itself, so thorough, so personal, so perfect was Thine acquaintance with the seas of trial!

Like refreshing flowers to an invalid, or life-giving sea-breezes to the faint, or thrilling strains of music to him with a heavy heart, so are the words and presence of Christ to thousands who walk in the hot

flames of persecution. The cup of sorrow becomes a chalice of joy when drunk from His hand. Suffering wears a crown of charms since He was made perfect in obedience by its sharp discipline. The Valley of the Shadow of Death loses its gloom when He is seen in it, and the future becomes luminous with enchanting prospects, when brought to His light. For the weakest brother Christ died; for the weakest brother Christ lives; and with the weakest brother there stands the strong Son of God: and that weak man learns to "glory in His infirmities," knowing that in Christ's training-school a defeat is often a veiled success, a disaster a disguised triumph, the shattering of his own house the building of a more enduring tabernacle, and the approach of death the dawn of a perfect life. Yes, though Bethany may not know Christ, and Capernaum no longer hear the Healer's voice, I have seen, you have seen, in blighted and lonely lives, in centres of temptation and conflict, in the abodes of prolonged trial on sick beds and at the grave, that Christ Jesus still achieves as great victories over sorrow and sin as those that made Him so popular at Capernaum and loved and worshipped at Bethany.

In the four Gospels Christ Jesus appears as the centre of an inner and an outer circle of disciples; and also of a nearer and remoter circle of beneficiaries stretching beyond His chosen servants and friends. The apostles were nearest to Him in position, in privilege, in affection, and in responsibility, and they most perfectly imbibed His spirit, transmitted His influence, and reflected His character; but even those holding themselves furthest from Him caught some of the rays

of light which beamed from His countenance; and walked, if not in the full blaze, yet in the diffused radiance, of His brightness. The paralytic felt a new pulsing life in his withered and shrunken limbs, although he knew nothing of the spring from whence it came: and *all* the ten lepers were immediately cleansed by His word, though only the grateful one obtained the larger and superior gift of spiritual purification. So there are many now whom Christ enlightens and elevates, who receive the secondary blessings of His Gospel, and no more; but to those who receive Him, and know Him, and rejoice in Him; who love Him with all their hearts, and yield themselves up to Him with a complete and self-forgetting homage; to a loving John, a confessing Peter, a receptive Mary, and a martyr James, He is the source of a singularly rich and complete manhood; blending in harmonious proportions, indomitable courage and strong sympathy, unconsumable devotion and tearful compassion, adamantine uprightness and graceful gentleness, sublime magnanimity, and childlike humility. *In a word, Christ is making the purest, noblest, and best men on the earth.*

No land has reared more men of marked moral power than our own, more men "who make for righteousness," and who being themselves saturated with truth and goodness, diffuse the like wherever they go; and notwithstanding all our faults, no country has in modern times given Christianity so fair and thorough a trial. Our chief distinction is the number of men amongst us pervaded with purity, who will not take a bribe, whose eyes flash out contempt of all meanness, "who stand four square to all the winds that blow," and who are patterns of transparent and real goodness. Of course,

if you take your ideas of Anglo-Saxon life from the newspapers, daily and weekly, you may deem this an exaggerated claim; for nothing, of necessity, is more one-sided and incomplete than a newspaper as a picture of the life of an age. It can chronicle politics and war, perhaps the filth of divorce courts and the triumphs of depravity; but what is it to know of the many families of high culture and courage, living in the love of God, and of the neighbour, breathing an atmosphere of purity and kindness, and dispensing blessing every day? What can it tell of the hidden worth of the nation, of the men pervaded with uprightness, and stored with strength, filled with courage, and armed with that commanding stainless might of Sir Galahad, whose

> "Strength was as the strength of ten,
> Because his heart was pure"?

Enter the pillared hall of the nation's biography and mark the statues erected therein within recent years! See the good Dean Alford, his robe of fleckless white, his heart of fearless courage, his teeming activity that never knows repose, his spirit touched to finest issues by the grace of Christ. And near him stands our own honoured Baptist Noel with a grace of manner unexcelled, a deep-toned spirituality lighting up his face that forces us to think at once of his master, a conscience sensitive as the apple of the eye, a perfect Christian gentleman, a lover of all good men, and a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. And next him may come George Hughes, a village squire, brave, manly, and God-fearing; and hard by, the form of Walter Powell, at once a thorough business man and a thorough Christian, with a high standard of principle

in the one and of devotion in the other; and Thomas Guthrie of tenderest compassion, weeping over a city's sins and healing a city's sorrows; and Thomas Wright Matthews, brave as a lion, gentle as a woman, gifted in many ways but most in the perception and enjoyment of the love of God in Christ.

A few paces further bring us to F. D. Maurice, as remarkable for his humility as for his thorough love of truth, and enthusiastic devotion to the eternal Son of God; and by his side that ceaseless worker and beautiful spirit James Hamilton; and beyond, the massive Chalmers, of whom John Macintosh, himself of royal lineage, said, "I cannot conceive of a wiser, greater, or better man. Every part of his character was colossal: he had the heart of twenty men, the head of twenty, and the energy of a hundred." Nor can we pass without joyous recognition, the genial, cultured, and brave-hearted Dean Stanley; the strong-willed, capable, and eminently good President Garfield; the meek and cheering singer Frances Ridley Havergal.

Who are these and whence came they? Who is at once the type and spring of their excellence, the source of all their nobility of character? Who are they? Why, these are they who have already taken the crown of their goodness and, bowing in lowliest humility before the Holy One, have cast it at His feet, crying, "Thou art worthy to receive honour and glory and dominion for ever and ever." These are they who have left behind them a great company, who, taking Christ as the ideal man, are now living so as to prove that the highest types of Christian excellence are attainable, and whose acts, if they could

be told out in their bare reality as they are known, would prove that all the saints are not dead, that all goodness is not historic: and yet all these feel nothing so powerfully and profoundly as that they owe any goodness they have to Him who is the fulness of grace and truth, and out of whose fulness they have received, and grace for grace.

And will any one say *the spirit of self-denial is ceasing from amongst us, and enthusiastic devotion to the welfare of souls on the wane?* On the wane! Indeed, in no respect is this fifth gospel more exactly parallel with the first, which tells how He bare all our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. Never were so many men moved with compassion as now. It is the spirit of the time, affecting alike theology and laws, institutions and individuals. Never did the flame of zeal burn brighter, or enthusiasm lead to greater hazard for the love of God and souls. In no age had the Saviour so many missionaries ready to risk their lives for His Gospel, so many soldiers prepared to die in fighting His battles. Christ is inspiring the self-sacrificing work of the age, and originating and sustaining the most beneficent operations for the good of those for whom He died. Never was this done on a larger scale, never with more heartiness of consecration, never with more thoroughness of allegiance to the authority of the Lord Jesus.

We admit mixture of motive, we allow for impurity of aim; but then we have a residue so marvellous that were we not accustomed to it as we are to the rising of the sun, it would astonish us as one of the chief wonders of the world. What have our ears heard and our eyes seen within the last few years? A man be-

longing to a great brewing family, the prospective head of a most prosperous business, with the most brilliant future opening before him, is brought into contact with Christ, sees Him, feels His power, is made alive to Him and His claims, and forthwith gives up his share of the lucrative trade and devotes himself to evangelistic work in the east end of London. Paul's sacrifice was not more clear and complete than his. And what shall we more say, for the time would fail us to tell of the delivery of God's message to Low London, day by day, by earnest Bible women,* of Mary Lyon and Fidelia Fiske, and Agnes E. Jones, of the Countess of Stolberg and her hospital, George Müller and his orphan asylum, of Edward Denison, Thomas Wright, Duncan Matheson, Mrs. Josephine Butler, and a host of others who, by faith in the Lord Jesus, have wrought out a blessed ministry of love to men, exhausted themselves in acts of self-denial and labours of compassion, and whose works shine like a river of stars athwart the heavens of the Church. Tell me that if these men and women had had no faith in the living Christ they would have breathed that spirit and wrought in that Christly way! I do not, I cannot believe it possible. Would faith in a "stream of tendency," in the "not ourselves which makes for righteousness," exercise such a wondrous power over the affections, rule out selfishness and rule in a love as large as the human race? I do not, I cannot believe it. Enthusiasm is not the child of logic. Admiration all aglow is not born of syllogisms. Good impulses are not stirred in hearts enslaved to

* "God's Message to Low London," by L. N. R., author of "The Book and its Story."—*Nisbet.*

evil by the multiplication table. Self-sacrifice has regard to persons, it is an offering of heart to heart, of mind to mind, and, therefore, I declare it to be an unblushing injustice, a naked wrong done to fact, to deny that Christ Himself is the inspiration of the self-denial that holds the world from burying itself in the deep-dug grave of its own selfishness, and thus withhold from Him the credit of awakening the affections of mankind, promoting pity for suffering men and women, and creating a merciful ideal of character. This is the Fifth Gospel, the present and actual work of the Saviour, and it is assuredly the same in its leading features as that which graces and glorifies the pages of the first four.

Amongst the unique services Christ is rendering to men now, we may not omit to mention the fact that He is making faith in *God a blessed and joy-giving reality, and trust in His fatherly care more easy, real, and living.* Science puts God further and further from His material universe, saying, "Here's law; where's God?" Christ brings Him closer and closer to the heart of man. Science exhibits us wrapped in the garment of iron-necessity. Christ reveals our lot as one girdled by divine love. Nature is so measurelessly big, so active, so pitiless, and law so ubiquitous, that God is as a shadow escaping in the infinite darkness; but Christ shows us the *Father.* He does not define God; He reveals Him. He brings the invisible within sight, the distant near, the divine into the human. He reveals God, not as a power, but as a Person, with a present providence, a redeeming love that will never forsake us, and a perfect sympathy that will always

help us. And in this way Christ is meeting the special need of those elect minds who have to front all sceptical opinion and to deal with the facts on which it is based, enabling them to shift their minds from the difficulties that spring up as to faith *about* God, and centre them in the act of faith in Him; to cease trusting to mere intellectual affirmations about Him, and by a living act of the spirit to rest on the true and only life.

Faraday, the greatest and most successful investigator of nature in modern times, a perfect master of scientific inquiry, was asked by Cardinal Wiseman whether, "in his deepest conviction, he held all the Church of Christ, the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, was shut up in the little sect in which he bore rule"; and the good man answered, in a way which exposed the deep springs of his own beautiful humility and nobleness of spirit, "Oh, no; but I do believe from the bottom of my soul that Christ is with us." *

Few men knew more of the resources of sceptical opinion and argument than Isaac Taylor, and he says, "If now the question be put to me whether my Christian belief enables me to rid myself of that burden of far-reaching care and trouble which I share with the thoughtful of all ages, my reply is this—in truth I have not found the means of ridding myself of this burden, but in the Gospels I have found Him in communion with whom I am learning how to bear it, and thus I hope to bear it to the end, still retaining my faith and trust in God as supremely good and wise. 'A just God and a Saviour.'" †

R. H. Hutton writes, "And now, let me ask myself,

* "Michael Faraday," by Prof. J. H. Gladstone, F.R.S., Ph.D.
† "Restoration of Belief," p. 381.

and answer the question as truly as I can, whether this great, this stupendous fact of the great Incarnation is honestly *believable* by any ordinary man of modern times, who has not been educated into it, but educated to reject it, who has no leaning to the 'orthodox' creed as such, but has very generally preferred to associate with heretics; who is quite alive to the force of the scientific and literary scepticism of his day; who has no antiquarian tastes, no predilection for the venerable past; who does not regard this truth as part of a great system, dogmatic or ecclesiastical, but merely for itself; who is, in a word, simply anxious to take hold, if he so may, of any divine hand stretched out to help him through the excitement and languor, the joy, the sorrow, the storm and sunshine, of this unintelligible life? From my heart I answer, Yes; believable and more than believable in any mood in which we can rise above ourselves to that supernatural Spirit which orders the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; believable, I say, because it so verifies and supplements that fundamental faith in God as to realize what were otherwise abstract, and without dissolving the mystery, to clothe eternal love with breathing life. God Himself is not believable while we wander helplessly in the labyrinth of mere natural phenomena, or lose ourselves in the mystery of 'the infinitudes,' or surrender ourselves captive to the newest phase of modern thought, or disguise our true natures with the affectations of antique mannerisms, or attempt to create Him out of our own conscience, or to find a place for Him in our dogmatic creeds. But whenever and however we so escape from ourselves as to acknowledge a living and eternal Lord, then it seems

to me to be not harder but easier to confess Him in something more than this, as one who has revealed to us the very essence of His nature, through the Son, who was with Him before the world was. It is not harder, but easier, to trust in a Will unveiled than in one still veiled, to confess the Father of that Eternal Son, who pours the light of filial love into every human conscience, and who has shown us that not power or knowledge, but free goodness only, is of the inmost essence of the divine nature." *

Daniel Macmillan, the founder of the well-known publishing house, writes in one of his beautiful and heroic letters, "But as I believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is the same with God, and perfectly manifests the Father's will in His life, and on the cross; I see highest reasons for thanking God for life, and I can say from the heart, thank God for my afflictions." †

But, not to multiply testimonies of this kind, it is certain that Christ is rendering signal service to students of nature and philosophy, to men of business and of affairs, saving them from blank Atheism and enervating Agnosticism, and inspiring them with a warm and living trust in God. It is found that Christ is a sufficient bulwark against the scepticism of our day. He is able to hold us firmly amidst materialistic buffetings and surging doubts. The incarnation is the stronghold of Theism. Faith in God in the modern world depends for many of us altogether on "believing in Jesus." "Lord, to whom shall we go?" is the

* "Theological Essays," pp. 282, 283.

† "Memoir of Daniel Macmillan," by Thomas Hughes, p. 244. Cf. "Life of F. W. Robertson," vol. i. p. 204. "Far above all other motives was his (Robertson's) love to Christ. It was the root of his life and the life of all his effort."

human cry, after all our hard and bitter lessons in science and history, in the order of the one and the disorder shown by the other, "Thou only hast the words of eternal life."

Nor is this all. The wide range and world-grasping scope of the Redeemer's present works are as marvellous as their character, in individual instances, is unique. Never did so many hear the Teacher's voice. In two hundred and fifty languages the Saviour cries, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." All nations desire Him, and are coming within the saving and providential purposes of the all-governing Prince of the kings of the earth. His love penetrates every province, and brightens every land; none are too common for the embrace of the Son of Adam, who is also the Son of God; none too unclean for His infinite pity. The Sower goes forth to sow. The precious grain is scattered by loving heart over continent and island, on the slopes of the everlasting hills, and in the fertile meads, and it is proclaiming its vitality alike under the burning sun of the far East, and amid the eternal snows of the arctic climes. Young India is turning its eyes to the Lord. Ethiopia is stretching out its hands to God. China is awaking from the sleep of ages. Japan has opened its doors to British civilization, and it cannot bar them against the entrance of Christ, for He is the very life of our civilization. Spain is setting out a freer course for the sanctifying truth; and close to the ears of the Papacy, New Testament preachers are sounding the Gospel abroad.

No Christ amongst us! Christianity a lingering

superstition dead or dying, is it? Then we should like to know what is alive. No Christ! Speak, ye blood-stained cliffs of Madagascar, and tell the inspirer of the heroic devotion that dared death itself for human good! Rise up, ye isles of the Southern Pacific, and sound the praises of those brave spirits who have crowned apostolic fidelity with a martyr's sacrifice! Come forth, ye Esquimaux, and witness for the loving missionaries who plucked you as brands from the burning fire of a most ruinous idolatry! No Christ! Whose voice is it, then, repeating His words in Persia and Thibet; in the streets of Jerusalem and Nazareth? in the farthest North and sunny South? Whose messengers are these four thousand Hindoos that go preaching in the plains of India of unsearchable riches? Are they Buddha's or Christ's, Brahma's or the Nazarene's? No Christ! Who, then, has stamped out the devil-worship of the people of Tinnevelly, and struck a blow at Hindoo caste, from which it never can recover to re-assert its tyrannous spell over the millions of Hindostan?

Why, there is nothing more marvellous under Heaven than the things Christ is doing now! He is winning men to faith in Himself all over the world, profoundly affecting men's convictions and acts in all sorts and conditions of society; taking to Himself the various and manifold powers of the world, assimilating them to His ends, and using them for His purposes. These are plain, hard, naked, verifiable facts; as plain and verifiable as the sight of this blind man: but amongst marvels this is chief, that Christ hath done all this, and yet men know not whence He is. The materials for a fifth gospel, as rich in pathos, as fasci-

nating in simple and natural beauty, as spiritual and refining in its power, are about us, if we were but inspired by the Spirit of God to group the doings of our Lord about the story of His adorable being. The canon of inspiration is not closed for want of facts, but because enough is written to induce men to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they may have life through His name. Christ still goes about doing good, only with a wider parish than Jerusalem, and more messengers than the twelve and the seventies He first commissioned to act in His name and wield His power. At this very time He makes millions to rejoice with His gladdening presence, lightens the burdens of care, encourages the heart of the timorous, cheers the loneliness of the widow and the orphan, smooths the pillow and brightens the vision of the dying, and puts His sustaining arm around the bereaved. Even now He is touching blind eyes, and removing clouds gathered in years of sin and indolence; making the young, solicited to evil, stand aghast at the daring of the tempter, and hurl into his face a defiant "No"; sweetening the solitude of the oppressed, and nerving the fortitude of the brave, pouring gladness into the cup of youth, inspiring and sanctifying the toil of manhood, and helping and comforting the tottering feebleness of age.

And now, brethren, I ask whether in the face of this collection of mere samples of the facts connected with the Christianity of our day we do any wrong to truth in proclaiming that the living Christ is—

(1) The very heart of Christianity, the strength and support of every saint;

(2) The centre and source of a living theology;
(3) The guarantee for a permanent Christianity; and
(4) The forcible and irresistible answer to the scepticism of this and every age?

Do wrong? Why, anything else is wholly inadequate as an interpretation of the facts, and leaves the residue of truth more far-reaching and suggestive than all that is otherwise explained. The circumstances which make up the materials of the four Gospels of Matthew and his fellow Evangelists have not more surely the Son of Man for their central and controlling figure than these facts proclaim Christ Jesus to be the chief spring and First Cause of the self-sacrificing devotion, regenerated activity, thorough-paced righteousness, and world-wide beneficence exhibited in the civilization of this century. These things are due to Him. Where He is not they are not. Where He is they are. Where He is partially received or welcomed with only suspended belief or suspicion, and His words only half applied, these effects fail to reach their true proportions; whereas wheresoever He is treated as a living friend, received as an absolute Lord, talked with in loving sympathy and obeyed with zest, there He achieves the most signal trophies of power, the sublimest results in character and service. The more truly man or Church can say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," the more palpable, striking, and marvellous are the witnesses to the Redeemer's presence and power.

Tyndall says:—"It is the method of science when a phenomenon presents itself to the production of which several elements may contribute, to exclude them one by one so as to arrive at length at the truly effective cause. Heat, for example, is associated with a pheno-

menon, we exclude heat but the phenomenon remains; hence heat is not its cause. Magnetism is associated with a phenomenon, we exclude magnetism but the phenomenon remains; hence magnetism is not its cause." * Adopting that method here, or availing ourselves of the facts which show its adoption, at what "truly effective cause do we arrive?" What is that one indispensable power without which these results would not exist?

(1) It has been seen, again and again, that it is not within the province of a code of ethics, however pure and exalted, to cleanse the springs of human action, sap the strength of evil passions and fire with an enthusiasm of goodness. (2) Doctrinal systems alone, though faultless in logic, and beautiful in symmetry, have repeatedly proved their incapacity to stem corruption and swell the tide of virtue. (3) Ideas will not of themselves create character. (4) And even moral influences, centred in living and good men, lose their force, to an unspeakable extent, when those men are gone. The primary cause, the only "truly effective" agent in the production of the facts before us, is not to be found in the unique character of Christ's moral teaching, nor in the influence of His perfect example and sinless life, nor in His sacrificial death on Calvary alone and exclusively, but in these, in connection with and *because* of that grand, crowning fact that stands out on every page of the Gospels in promise, and of the Acts and Epistles in historical detail, that though He was dead, He is now alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave.

He died for our sins; but He was raised again

* "Fragments of Science," p. 51.

for our justification. "He, because He continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Every precept derives its force from His present living authority and power. All His doctrines spring out of and are associated with His endless life. His sublime influence abides because He has a timeless being, and knows no change or decay. He is His own precept, He is doctrine, He is influence, He is all and in all because He is the eternally living love, and the eternally loving life, that redeems and saves a lost world.

Napoleon is credited with saying, "I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me . . . but to do this it was necessary that I should be *visibly* present with the electric influence of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts. Christ alone has so succeeded in so raising the mind of man towards the Unseen that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy; He asks for that which a philosopher may often seek in vain at the hands of his friends or a father of his children, or a bride of her spouse, or a man of his brother. He asks for the human heart: He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally, and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man with all its powers and faculties becomes an annexation to the empire of

Christianity. . . . This it is which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Jesus Christ."* And this it is which carries to its highest pitch of power the inspiration of His commands; fills with sweetest pathos and restfulness His promises, and makes the Scriptures the seedcorn of the richest moral harvest of the world. Our Christ is no phantom of the imagination, no vivified fragment of Jewish history, but a real living person. We look back to His earthly life so that we may look up with a fuller intelligence and a heartier appreciation. We delightedly read how the life was manifested, and handled, and seen, and tasted of men, that we may the more completely enjoy the privilege of His living friendship. Our reliance is not on the book but on Him through it; having its beginning, indeed, in the outward facts of His wondrous life, but extending, deepening, and fortifying itself from day to day by communion with the living Saviour. His pardoning acts then wake penitence and trust toward Him now; His yearning towards the sorrow of the thief on the cross when He Himself was dying, and His ready and joyful ministration of forgiveness and Paradise, make trust in His love a delight and confiding communion a repose and a luxury. The historical Christ is the present, the eternal Christ; the Christ of the future is livingly active to-day. Reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we say with a fearlessness of faith that knows no quivering fear, much more shall we be saved by His life.

And since Christ is a living Teacher our theology is not a dead science. The Incarnation and the Sacrifice

* Luthardt. "Apologetische Vorträge," pp. 234, 293.

of the eternal Word are the leading points in all Biblical Theology; and since the Word is unfolding Himself in and through all the generations of men, our theology cannot be a lifeless and unprogressive study. It must be instinct with His vitality, and progressive by reason of the new facts He is constantly placing within its legitimate province. Christian thought cannot be bound in the fetters of any age. Christ moves on and enlarges and broadens the interpretation of His own work and life, by the ever fresh applications He is making of His power and grace, of His truth and example to the changing necessities and varying moods of successive ages.

The permanent and fundamental facts of Christianity, like the facts of all sciences, are the same now as at the beginning, fixed and unalterable; but the *theory*, the exposition of those facts grows through all ages. Sun, moon, and stars were not made by the inductive philosophy. The chemist is not a creator: his facts as as old as the everlasting hills; his theories are but of yesterday, and some of them more evanescent than himself. The life-giving air does not come by analysis. "Man is the student and interpreter of nature." The Christian man is the student and interpreter of the Scriptures, and finds his facts concerning God, man's relations to God, the fulness of the Incarnate Word, the object of the Saviour's mission, human duty and destiny, recorded therein. To them, in their substance and essence, nothing is added, nor can be added; nothing is taken away, nor can be; but as to the inferences from, and applications of them, it were folly not to climb "the

ascending road of a patient and rigorous induction."

Christ the Teacher is with His Church still, as really as we are here, although He has passed from His place as visible head of His school. The spirit of wisdom and revelation surely did not vanish from the Church when the Council of Nice rose from its sitting, or Augustine went to Heaven. Not that the creeds of our fathers are without their uses. No. To meet them with indiscriminate resistance, and decry all dogma, betrays a shallow, unreasoning, and unscientific temper, an ignorance of the laws and tendencies of all thinking, and an unfitness to judge of the true nature of Science and Christianity. Creeds register thought, chronicle the progress of the Kingdom of God in one of its aspects, and show how Christ has touched the intellect of successive periods of time. They are not magic, they are not life, but the terms in which gifted minds have expressed their judgment of Christian life. Greater mistake, however, there is not than to suppose they will do the work of the Eternal Person who is the centre and core of the Gospel. Chinese physicians are fabled to have had so much faith in their prescriptions, that having written them out carefully on paper or parchment, and then washed off the ink into a cup of water, they gave the fluid to their patients, instead of the healing drugs to which their prescription referred; and because some physicians of the soul have supplied an unlimited quantity of skilfully-worded creeds, diluted with an equal quantity of teaching, instead of saying, with Philip to Nathaniel, "Come and see Christ for yourself," our censors have

concluded that we have nothing but creed, and that the "prescription" is our whole and only possession.

By no means. Christianity is a living thing, and living things grow; not only a letter, or it might perish, but a spirit and power, and must abide: and though not at the same rate, yet as really as Science, does it increase its stores: old truths are more accurately adjusted and set to fuller harmonies; and new truths are deduced. The creed vase of past generations becomes too small, and though its shape is elegant, and its exterior finely polished, it has to be broken up, and the fragments are about us, and some think the precious contents are lost; but no, the Heavenly Potter is at the wheel, and soon a fresh production displays a richer excellence, and holds a more valuable treasure than any we had before. At no time in the history of the Church were the words of the Lord Jesus so eagerly studied, and their meaning so clearly perceived and keenly discriminated as now. Never before our age, thanks to our opponents, has there been such a "perception of the peculiarities, of the essential, innermost, distinguishing marks of the unapproached and unapproachable character described to us in the Four Gospels."* Though the revelation is closed, though the subject matter of Christianity itself remains one, solid, undiminishable, and never to be increased, addition not necessary, omission not allowable, and substitution a mistake, yet who dare say he knows the full meaning of those facts, and has exhausted the powers of that revelation? "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass

* Dean Stanley.

withered, and the flower thereof fell away; but the word of the Lord abideth for ever, and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

With such facts before us to-day, we do not fear for the future of the religion of Christ. Its permanence is guaranteed by Him who is with us alway even unto the end of the world. Through all the ages He has been working out His sovereign purposes of love and grace, is working now, and will work, for He is for ever what He was yesterday, what He is to-day. He knows no decay. His strength suffers no paralysis. His eye does not grow dim. Christ is Christianity, and Christ is the Eternal Son. God over all, blessed for ever; why should His work come to nought? From the first a religion of progress, repeatedly reasserting its inherent and conquering vitality after long periods of langour and depression, now exerting with undiminished ardour and invincible energy its mighty power; the source of enduring liberty, the inspiration of fraternity, the sure guardian of equality; why should it pass away? Complete as a revelation of God and man, unequalled in its satisfaction of the natural and universal hunger and aspiration of the human spirit, a body of living principles independent of the changing forms of political government; why should it prove transitory? It has not one of the elements of decay. It has every element of permanence.

Buddhism, once the religion of millions, loses its missionary zeal and becomes flaccid and nerveless, because it has no Divine Father to reveal, no

living Saviour, no individual conscience and spirit. These are the essence of the gospel of Christ. Hindooism is being swept away by the march of civilization: Christianity achieves its most pronounced victories in the palace and at the foot of the throne of civilization. Confucius had no sympathy with progress, and his religion was ethic without worship, and ceremony without reality; and therefore its temples are lonely, and its morals feeble. The watchword of the Christian is "Go forward;" the adoration and love of God and love of men are its morals, and unreality receives its curse. Mahometanism has no flexibility, fixes itself in a certain social framework, and deals in details rather than principles: Christianity is set in no fixed mould, can "bend with the willow and swim with the stream," and yet hold its own with untainted purity and increasing advantage. Oriental religions collapse at the touch of Ithuriel's spear of science; the Gospel welcomes science and extracts help and food from what is death to them. The most ancient and wide-spread forms of worship have lost their aggressive spirit, and show little or no tendency to propagate themselves. Christianity has what Mazzini calls the "propagandism of every moment," and has it now in fuller force than ever. Silently, slowly, but surely, it casts out all that is hurtful to man's interest and degrading to his dignity. Caste, polygamy, slavery, female degradation, cruel conditions of labour, barbarous practices, inhuman rites, gradually recede. The Galilean conquers everything, and appropriates whatever is good and useful in the existing conditions of social life. Science is its handmaid; material wealth

its means; intellect its instrument. It is not a petrifaction: it is a life. It is not a fossil, but a living energy.

Amongst earth's many voices, then, we clearly hear one wholly unlike the rest; it is sweet, soothing, and hope-inspiring. It is not the voice of a book, nor of a creed, nor of a Church; it is the voice of the living Saviour of men, heard above the thunderings of human agitation and restlessness. We listen and find rest and joy, and say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and forthwith we have the witness within ourselves that our feet are on the Rock of Ages, and that His kingdom can never, never fail. Be it that men's hearts are quaking in fear, as if the foundations were being destroyed; that ecclesiastical structures of remote antiquity are cracking and falling around us, that huge volumes of dogmatic theology are being cast aside, our souls shall not fear, in this will we be confident. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the Christ of Paul and John is our refuge. He is in the midst of us, and He shall help us, and that right early. He does not sleep. He cannot die. Those three years of brief ministry in the streets of Jerusalem and in the manufacturing towns of the north of Palestine were but the signs of His power, prophecies of His saving energy for all the ages. The Lord is risen indeed; the Lord of Hosts is with us. The Christ of Pentecost is both our hope and our victory.

The convincing and the irrefutable answer, then, that we have to give to the scepticism of this age is written in the strong, beautiful and noble works Christ

is accomplishing in the souls of men. When the Lord Jesus was *visibly* here, all men did not believe in Him. Even the disciples of John the Baptist were not without doubts, and perhaps even the mind of the illustrious pioneer himself may have sustained a shock in the depression and loneliness of the prison; and hence messengers were sent saying to Christ, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" Mark the Teacher's answer. He did not refer them to miracles wrought sixty generations ago, or to marvellous works done twenty or fifty miles away. Not a word about the turning of water into wine, or the healing of the nobleman's son, but there and then He made the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, and said, Go and shew John what you have seen, and blessed is he who is not offended in me. This is our plan. This is the new translation of the Gospel we have to make. We need to put it into the very life of our age; to take it to the woe, and want, and misery, to the error and superstition, and conquer them all; and on the basis of these victories preach His Gospel of salvation from sin. Let Christ repeat in us His former wonders, and though some may not know whence He is, the poor and needy will hear us gladly, and will no more think of saying Christianity has failed than of declaring that the sun has, when they feel his beams warming their blood, or that the earth has, when the harvest fields wave with corn, and the golden ears rattle in the breeze. When Ulysses came back with fond desire to his long-left home in Ithaca, even his wife did not recognize him, so changed was he by the perils and hardships of the Trojan war and the vicis-

situdes of twenty years' wandering; but when he took down the famous bow of Eurytus, that none but himself was able to handle, and at once bent it, "like a green wand lopped from a willow-tree," and sent the arrow swift to its mark, wife and family and friends at once confessed him the true Ulysses, and rejoiced in his return. So, when Christ our King shall have solved a few more of the vexing problems of our social life, and with His royal strength proved himself through us His followers mighty to save the world from evils of every kind and degree, those who now know Him not shall admit His power, and rejoice in His salvation.

Still we must not expect too much. You have seen the matchless skill that gleams forth from the picture of "Christ leaving the Prætorium;" but did you notice by the side of Gustave Dore's completed and perfected work those rough sketches, flashed forth from his genius ere he attempted the larger task? Haze and mist hang over them. Your peering look detects the outlines of that majestic figure, whose eyes streaming with divine pity follow you into every part of the gallery; but you need that finished and perfect picture with every detail elaborated, and all the shading and colouring completed, to help you to understand those rough drafts, those imperfect sketches, in which the mind of the painter felt out after his magnificent and thrilling idea. So it needs the transforming and finishing touch of the vision of the Perfect One to make evident the hidden beauty, the struggling excellence of our lives here and now. It doth not yet appear what we *really are*. It is not manifest what we

shall be ; but when He shall appear, and we are made like Him, then much that is now despised, as fragmentary or useless, will be shown in relation to our perfected life, and prove itself to have been of immense and infinite value.

Meanwhile let not the despair of the world eat out the faith of the Church. Let us believe heartily in Christ's present power, yield yourselves up wholly to Him for His perfecting grace to do with us as He will, and at length men, looking into His face, shall say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him and He will save us."

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT: IS IT A PRESENT-DAY FACT?

"How shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory?"—2 CORINTHIANS iii. 8.

"YOU ought not," says Carlyle, "to judge of a building whilst the scaffolding is up." True, but you cannot always avoid it. Some edifices, and those amongst the best, are a long time in building. Generations come and go, and even centuries, before the Cathedral of Cologne has the top stone brought on to it. Therefore, unfair as it may be to the architect and to the workmen, yet it is often inevitable that a verdict must be passed on the structure whilst the ghastly poles and ungainly ropes hide its fair proportions and increasing beauty from the sight.

It was so with Paul and the Gospel he preached. The foundations of Christianity had not long been laid. Not much more than a quarter of a century had elapsed since the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Only a few courses of stones of the new Christian edifice—"the habitation of God through the Spirit"—appeared in view. To men of piercing vision and prophetic foresight like Paul the glorious proportions and surpassing beauty of the entire structure stood revealed; but for most other men it was a sore trial of faith, that the ancient and honourable

house of Judaism still bulged so largely in sight, and that many dwellers in its capacious rooms were so eager to assert its permanence, and treat with bitter scorn and malign persecution those who had forsaken it for the newer abode then going up in the name and according to the design of the Nazarene. Indeed, the toughest work of the Apostle and his comrades was to maintain the steadfast faith and preserve the unbroken allegiance of the Christian Jews. They were always in danger of turning "back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto they desired to be in bondage again." The past fascinated them like a serpent and held them like a fetter. Like men of enfeebled brain, they recurred with fatal facility to their old ideas, and fell into the practice of their old ritual, unable to shake off the weight of custom and delight in their newly-acquired spiritual freedom. Hence Paul, eager to fortify them against fear, and fire them with hope, not only described the bases and foundations of the Christian religion, but boldly proclaimed its superiority to the law that came by Moses, and the quickening service given by the prophets. Every way, said he, it is a richer gift of God. Its life is fuller, its spirit purer, its ideas clearer, its ethical inspirations stronger, its guarantees of permanence more secure, and its service to men an all-excelling glory and splendour. The judgment was a forecast at that date mainly; but it was rooted and grounded in observable facts. It was a prediction, but it was based on data of such proved and undeniable solidity that he could boldly ask, as he gazed on a new and enlarging world of spiritual victories: How shall not the ministration of the spirit—the service

that is spiritual in its nature and issues, and is the work of the Lord, the Spirit—be far more glorious than the divine legislation of the Hebrew law-giver, and the cogent warnings and cheering promises of the Hebrew prophets?

Still, if I were to talk to you of the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, you might well ask me: What is the use? We are in no danger from the Synagogue of the Jews. The Jews are coming to us and our Leader. We are not going to them. We are not likely to exchange the consolatory and gladdening messages of the Gospel of John for the lengthened and wearisome ritual of the book of Leviticus. We know the superiority of the Christianity of Christ Jesus, and are sure that it has completely out-distanced the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees as the swift-footed and viewless electricity has outrun the Hebrew postmen. Our eyes are open to the simple beauty, chaste simplicity, and wonderful wealth of power, characteristic of the Gospel of Jesus. We have no more temptation to go back to the narrow and pinched limits of a material Judaism than to eat our meals with the tools supplied by nature, or to displace the repeating rifle in war by the cross-bow.

Our danger is far different, and springs from other sources, in short, from the difficulty of believing that there is an actual, a present-day ministry of the Lord the Spirit, that there is a real, vital, and increasingly glorious ministry of truth and purity, redemption and regeneration, carried on by God for men now and here, as certainly as the sun shines and the rivers run. We believe in God, that He is; and in His Son Jesus

Christ, that He came and lived and died for men; but we wish to be sure, out of all reach of fear and doubt, that the Spirit of God is actually now conducting an administration of mercy and salvation, light and life, freedom and power, grace and victory for us men. Doubts haunt us like a creeping paralysis. Fears fill us like water rushing into a broken ship. We sigh for an intrinsic conviction that God, the living God, is with us; a conviction built up and constructed of reason and observation and revelation, which shall inspire calm, feed patience, uplift hope, and reinforce zeal amidst the babble of confused and despairing voices around us. Richard Jefferies says of Nature: It shows "no kindness to man from birth hour to ending; neither earth, God, nor sky cares for him. Nothing is good to man but man. Let man then leave his gods and lift his ideal beyond them." Anglicans say "Nonconformity is decaying." High Churchmen rejoice as they tell us "the last rose of the Protestant summer has bloomed" and passed away. Positivists affirm that the Christian Church is already removed far away from the sunshine of human interest. It is admitted some cherished dogmas are shattered to pieces; trusted organizations collapse before the new tasks of our time, and yet, in all and above all, there is for some of us the greater difficulty and chief ordeal of facing the burning question, "What is God Himself doing?" Is there, or is there not, a divine ministry of light and love and salvation and strength to men to-day, as real and provable as in the days when Paul ventured to contrast the new outflow of the power of God in the Christianity of his time with the ancient Judaism, and to assert its greater permanence and surpassing splendour? All turns on

that. "Our heart and our flesh cry out for the living God." There was a Pentecost; is there one now? The Holy Ghost was poured out in streams, in rivers of power, and men baptized therein found all things made new, both themselves and their world. Are the streams dried up? "Old men" dreamt dreams of far-off spiritual victories and waxed valiant in fight to obtain them. What are the "old men" doing now; dreaming, and nothing more, or dreaming and daring and fighting? Young men saw visions of "Macedonia" calling for an Evangelist, leapt to the occasion with irrepressible eagerness, and carried into Europe the glad message of the love of God. What do the young men see to-day? Nothing but fame to be won, money to be gained, and ease to be secured; or are they willing to hazard their lives in stout combat for forlorn causes and knightly chivalry for oppressed weakness? Bondsmen and bondswomen, the poorest and the most despised of the old Roman world, felt the spell of the Spirit, shook off their spiritual chains, and spake the word of the Lord as the Spirit gave them utterance. Is the Gospel still the power of God unto salvation for the very refuse and dregs of our civilization?

Ah! friends, if we can only answer these questions in the spirit and with the certitude of Paul, we shall not need to trouble about much else; but if we must be dumb on this, then, all is lost, and lost beyond recovery. I have no hesitation in saying that we may, and must, give Paul's answer; that, using his tests, judging Christianity and life as he judged them, we are forced to say of our present condition and future prospects: "The ministry of the Spirit is glorious in its present reality and helpfulness, variety and fulness,

and will be more and more glorious as the ages roll on."

I have looked far and near; examined the most obstinate and intractable facts—"the immense decline in sincerity of spiritual interest," the deadly sway of fashion in religion, the tampering with conviction, the dominance of misgiving and distrust, and the partial paralysis of spiritual nerve (not a solitary jot of evidence would I shut out of view)—and yet I affirm that there is not a pertinent sign and proof on which Paul could rest in the year 58 that does not meet us in 1893; not a witness quotable to the Jews of Corinth that is not more patent, potent, and pervasive for the perplexed of London—witness and proof both assuring us that this ministration of freedom, life, and character to men is going on, and will go on, from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit. Noise is not power. The quarrels of bishops in law courts are not the best indications of the trend and spirit of the ages. The "cackle" of the papers is not the real hidden and reproductive life of the world. In that *first* century the mightiest forces belonged to the spiritual order; came into play without observation: noiselessly as the dew, and gentle and genial as sunlight, and so now: but they registered themselves at length in facts which have strong, undeniable representatives and parallels in the life of humanity to-day.

First, then, amongst these proofs comes that indisputable product of "the ministration of the Spirit," *the new society of believers in Christ Jesus, the new world of redeemed and regenerate souls, created and held in its true spiritual orbit by the power of Christ, the Eternal*

Sun. As at "the beginning" the Spirit moved on the face of the waters and prepared the way for the new home and the new life that was to tenant it, so, when the Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, a new institution started into being—despised, indeed, of men, but dear to God; homely in its simplicity, but unique in its charactor; non-priestly and anti-priestly in its tone and spirit, and yet giving all souls free access into the holiest of all; under law to the Master Jesus, but gloriously free from everybody else; narrow enough to exclude pride and greed, hatred and selfishness, but so broad as to embrace Jew or Greek, bond or free, to whom Christ was all and in all; the first true and real brotherhood, the organ of spiritual service, the messenger of spiritual ideas and the channel of spiritual influence. The book of the Acts of the Apostles is also the book of the Acts of Churches. The letters of Peter and James, John and Paul are addressed to Christian societies. The ministry of the Holy Ghost issues in a new social organism, which buries the hates of centuries out of sight, lifts purity to absolute supremacy, and makes the love of God and men the ruling passion of life and action.

Four great administrations direct the lives of men in the first century: Judaism, Roman Imperialism, Greek culture, and the Christianity of Christ Jesus; but the greatest of the four is Christianity. The ancient ministry of Moses had not lost all its force. His voice was still heard in the synagogues on the Sabbath Day; and the system he had initiated was strong, compact, aggressive, and missionary; winning its way into the heart of the Roman Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch, and preparing them for the messages of Peter and

Philip. Rome was in evidence everywhere, its perfected laws, drilled legions, and splendid roads made it the pioneer of civilization and of Christianity for the world. Nor were the voices of Socrates and Plato, Aristotle and Zeno, altogether dumb. Thoughtful men in the eternal city sought and found in Greek philosophy and art what they could not obtain at their own doors ; and souls like Seneca and Cato drank deep and refreshing draughts from the fountains of Athens ; but the ministry that was transforming the whole basis of spiritual thought, destroying the old sanctions of conduct, benumbing the idolatrous faiths of the world, educing faith in God and in men, penitence, hope, service, and introducing a moral revolution, was that new institute, "the body of Christ," the "fellowship of the faithful," scarcely known of men like Tacitus and Suetonius and Josephus, but mightily operative in Antioch and Jerusalem, Corinth and Rome. Christ had ascended on high, but He had sent another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, whose ministry was abiding and should abide for ever and ever.

Now, think what the addition of an institute of that nature and range to the life of the world means! Institutions are the most creative and determining influences on character and life. We are born into them. They never leave us. They make or mar us. We affect them somewhat, but not as they mould us. Home, with its sunny loves and genial smiles ; school, full of discipline for brain, and drill in conduct ; business, goading the will, enlarging knowledge, developing skill and power in affairs ; politics, with their wider views and severer temptations ; literature, recording the past, and multiplying the energies of the

present; art, quickening the fancy and feeding the imagination: what perennial institutions! How unspeakably precious their aid to men; who can declare the full story of their matchless deeds? In short, the measure of the manhood and the key to the future of a country are both found in the laws and ideas, tone and temper of its institutions. Add, then, a new spiritual institute to the moral ministries of the world, and you remake it, restore its soul and send it along the lines of progress at an accelerated pace. Let Raikes originate the Sunday-school, and you create a new future for politics and society! Is it not so? Has any one guessed the harvest from that one deed? Is any one able to bring before us, even in briefest outline, the results which have followed the creation of the modern missionary enterprise by Carey and Fuller? Can you estimate the gift God made to this nation and to humanity in the Methodism of John Wesley? Have the historians told the full tale of the work of Luther in his leadership of the revolt of conscience against papal corruptions and in his formation of Protestantism? No! Nor is it possible for any tongue or all tongues to declare the results of that divine ministry which reared "the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

Ye yourselves are a church of Jesus Christ, are witness that this ministry has not ceased. How inspiring your story! What saintly men and women have been nourished amongst you! Men of unbending will, of

robust conscience, haters of compromise, and stalwart battlers for truth; women of tender sympathy, intense zeal, patient devotion and winning gentleness. And still the same creative work goes on — here and in India and China and Africa — in obedience to the monitions of the same Spirit, and in expectation of His continued guidance and aid!

There are men, I know, who have lost faith in all churches; and it is not astonishing, considering how many Christians have forsaken or over-laid the plans of the Divine Architect. But let us not blame Jesus Christ for the faults of His followers. Three things are obvious: first, that Christian societies spring into life, at home and abroad, in our crowded cities, and far away amongst the people of China and Japan, America and India, various in form, but breathing one spirit, diverse in polity, but mainly aiming at one goal; and, secondly, that they all, according to the testimony of Professor Hatch, more or less consciously are travelling towards the divine ideal of the Christian society sketched for us in the New Testament. Thirdly, undeniably it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that wherever you have one of these societies of men and women drawn together by the voice of God, charged with the energies of the Holy Ghost; loyal to the loving and brotherly Christ, clinging to His truth in humility, love, and hope; hating divisiveness and abhorring caste; simple in structure, and self-governing in movement; full of devoutness and sweet reasonableness; incarnating His ideas of God and Eternity, sin and duty; at work for the solace of the sad, the relief of the distressed, the guidance of the bewildered and the salvation of the lost; there you

have the highest form of social life and action, and a potent witness to the actual and verifiable ministry of the Spirit of God.

Recognize, I beseech you, the divinity of your creation. "You are God's building." "You are God's husbandry." Forget not your unique calling. Exult in it. Do not forsake it for anything more fashionable. Value your simple, free, anti-priestly, spiritual organization; walk worthy of it; adorn it with all good deeds, so that men, seeing your good works, not only as individuals, but as a society, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

The next most signal evidence of this ministry in the first and nineteenth centuries alike, *is the fulness and overflow of spiritual life consequent upon the descent and gracious indwelling of the Holy Ghost.* The Christian society of the New Testament lives in habitual dependence upon, and hourly communion with, God. Pentecost is the Kingdom of God come, and coming, not "in word only, but in power and in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost." Fulness of spiritual power in the new-born community is the sign and proof of divinity. God and the Church are one. It lives in Him, moves by His inspiration, voices His thought, and uses His redeeming and renewing omnipotence. There is an "open road" between the soul and God; and men go along it in glad troops and sweet societies. Prayer is "without ceasing," because it is no longer projected into specific hours and restricted to separate acts, and "sacred" places, but is as continuous and regular as breathing the air is to the healthy and strong. Pentecost begins in the atmosphere of devo-

tion, is saturated with it and crowned by it. Communion with the divine bathes the Acts of the Apostles, and overflows in the Epistles of Paul and John. Do the new workers realize the stupendous vastness of their enterprise? They wait, praying, hopeful, alert, and receptive, and they are endowed with power from on high. Are they threatened with imprisonment and death? They cry to the Lord, not for deliverance, but for boldness to do their work. Is their noted leader in prison? They meet in the house of one of their friends and pray till the knock of the delivered man is heard at the door.

The nature of a minister and missionary determines the quality, tone, power, and helpfulness of his ministry. A man serves according to what he is. He cannot give what he has not got; nor convey that which is alien to his inward being. If he is to rebuke despondency, purify sight, shatter and shift the burden of convention and conformity, expel vanity and caste, and get rid of low aims, he must himself be radiant in hope, keen in vision, free in spirit, lowly in soul, lofty as heaven, and pure as God in his ideals.

Carry up your cardinal law of service to the ministration of the Spirit. He, the indefinable, incomprehensible Spirit, gives according to what He is in Himself; therefore, He gives spirit, energy, life, fulness of life, eternal life. The men who are His gift are not "ministers of the letter that killeth, but of the spirit which giveth life": men filled and fired with invincible daring, triumphant self-abnegation, masterly self-control, deep devoutness, overflowing power; men sustained by a vivid consciousness of the presence of God, as the light of all their seeing, the power of all

their service, and the goal of all their endeavour. A society of such souls is the proof, supreme and all convincing, of the actuality of God's present-day ministry to the world.

Some one says: "Here the parallel breaks down completely.

> 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh! life, not death, for which we pant;
> More life, and fuller, that we want."

But, stay! Let us collect our facts—all of them; omit nothing, nor set down aught in despair. Remember the variety and opulence of the life of the Spirit. Note every feature in the character of Him who was the first Christian, and is the Pattern of spiritual life for all the ages. Record the work all through the day, as well as the prayer a great while before the day dawns. Follow the incessant service to hungry souls and diseased bodies, as well as the night spent in communion with the Father prior to the critical and decisive choice of the twelve apostles from the circle of disciples. The prayer-meeting is not the only index of the Christianity of to-day, nor is it the best, if only one is to be taken. Brave speech, patient silence, meek endurance, heroic venturesomeness, unselfish ministry, these, too, worketh the one and the self-same Spirit, who ministers to all severally as He will. Life is neither all jocund summer nor storm-filled winter. Sombre grey is only one of Nature's colours. Bright blue skies and golden sunsets enrich her widespread canvas. Gatherings for prayer—if themselves marked by devoutness and reality, freshness of feeling, and fervour of soul, do not fail to attract and hold; but when swayed by the "letter" of for-

malism, as, alas! they sometimes are, they "kill," and the children of the Spirit keep away. We do not *sing* —who that thinks can!—

> "'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought:
> Do I love the Lord or no?
> Am I His, or am I not?"

but we say it, specially if we have been betrayed into a false deed or mean word, a frigid prayer or a selfish wish. The life of faith to-day is bright and glad. We joy in God as well as believe in Him, and, therefore, sing—

> "Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
> Thou fount of life, Thou life of men;
> From the best bliss that earth imparts,
> We turn unfilled to Thee again."

We do not pray less than our fathers. We work more. We are less formal in our approaches to the gates of Heaven with our express petitions, and we do not stay so long; but we are oftener found at the doors of our fellows with a God-given message of brotherly sympathy and help. Our temper is not wanting in real devotion; but it is more sympathetic with the entire life of men.

> "God glows above
> With scarce an intervention, presses close
> And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours."

And as His sons we must work, seeking and saving that which our brothers have lost. God is Himself the God of joy and blessedness, and we know it, and therefore are glad in Him with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; and yet yearnings for strong spiritual discipline, cravings for religious communion, are as deep even in this age of materialism and social change, as when in olden times they filled monasteries,

manned the great orders and sent wave upon wave of pilgrims and crusaders to the holy places; but instead of starting on pilgrimages or dwelling in seclusion, we go forth to pull down the strongholds of evil in the state and city, in legislation and society; and seek to build up our manhood to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, sustained in our own vigorous onset by the fulness of life and energy we have received from the Lord the Spirit.*

Thanks be to God, a great cloud of witnesses, a host of little known, but devoted and unconquerable souls, attest the reality and splendour of the ministry of the Spirit in this our day. May it increase more and more!

Perhaps the most notable mark and sign of that New Order; the stamp of its divinity; is not its teaching; not its devoutness, but its burning holiness, its magnetic and yet repellent fire of saintliness; the *uplifting of the standard of sanctity, and the outflow of conquering holiness.* The society in Jerusalem instantly awakened a keen dread of evil by the very splendour of its own purity, so that men held aloof from it, afraid of the exposure of all insincerity, covetousness, and lying. They shrank from committing themselves to so solemn a league and covenant as identification with the Christian Church involved. "They durst not," says the historian, "join themselves unto them." It was one of the peculiarities of the Church that it stimulated the keenest susceptibility to the approach of moral evil, whilst it brought men into fellowship with the heart of all pity, and the source of all compassion. No

* Cf. "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life." By William Law, M.A., 1729, pp. 7, 30, 31, 48.

other religion did that. In this Christianity was, and is, unique. The Holy Spirit develops the consciousness of sin, and yet creates and nourishes a consciousness of an actual redemption from sin ; makes men feel their guilt, and yet teaches them to reckon themselves dead, indeed, to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. As the Divine Master sat down to eat with publicans and sinners, and yet Himself was the Holiest of the Holy, so the Spirit of Christ created and developed the acutest sense of personal demerit at the same time that it made men partakers of the divine holiness and tenderness It is indeed a marvel that the age which is a century of sublimest ethical advance is also one of passionate and all-conquering compassion. The victory of early Christianity was the victory of an onpressing purity, the triumph of a stainless conscience towards God and men blended with a self-suppressing and soul-kindling "enthusiasm for humanity."

One of our newspapers lately lamented the weakening of the sense of sin in our age, and attributed it to the universal application of the historic method of study, by which sin becomes a part of the evolutionary process of human development, and ceases to be regarded as "a very real catastrophe in the moral nature of man." * This, it is held, deteriorates conviction, enervates judgment, dulls the sense of personal responsibility, blinds men to the fatal finality of choice, and excludes the irreversible quality attaching to our deeds. So sin is treated as nothing more than inherited bias, defective knowledge, one of the pains of growth, and not inward perversity, fixed rebellion against the rule of God.

* John Morley on Emerson, in "Emerson's Miscellanies," p. 56.

No doubt there is some ground for these lamentations. But we must not forget that the physical science which has developed and extended the ancient doctrine of Evolution, has also demonstrated with irresistible cogency that our moral and spiritual life is under law, that "our deeds are fates," that character tends day by day more and more with ever-increasing energy to permanence. We do not shunt the damnation for the wrong of yesterday by a larger hope about to-morrow. If we sow to the flesh we must of the flesh reap corruption. Never did men feel so sure that deeds are seeds as they do now, and at no date was the intelligence so clear, and the conviction so strong that a man is making *himself*, his character and his future condition, by the acts of each succeeding day.

Nor is that all. "The Spirit when He is come will convince the world of sin." The Spirit has come, and the conception of sin has enlarged with each advancing century. It grew and embraced within its censure wide areas of what had been judged either not wrong at all, or permissible wrong in the first century; and it has been growing ever since, but never with more energy and rapidity than in these later years. The standard of justice, humanity, and purity is higher to-day than ever. A hundred years ago Christian men trafficked in their fellows with a good conscience; and even preachers of redemption from the slavery of sin, defended the accursed business of selling their brothers into bondage, without the slightest compunction. Not only is that "sum of all villanies" in the last gasp of life, but the temperance reformation has been advanced so far in the last fifty years that Joseph Cook says, "The advisability of total abstinence is a closed issue, and is

no longer in debate among enlightened men and women." I hope that is not too sanguine a conclusion; but whether it is or not, it is true the Holy Spirit has so quickened the sense of responsibility for national drunkenness that the Churches cannot rest and are more resolute and aggressive than ever. Moreover, within the last few years the same ministry to the conscience has been so abundantly exercised, that the cruel unchastities of wealth have roused a storm of reprobation, and the pollution of parliamentary and civic life raised a whirlwind of rebuke. John Morley may be cited as a witness of the entrance of the cleansing spirit into politics when he says, "Dominions, thrones, principalities, powers, what are they to us? We do not care for them in politics. What I desire is that politics shall become the means of making those lives happier in the best way." Thus within the Church of Christ, and right through to the very fringes of human society, the great Christian law of righteousness, humanity, and love is being promulgated with unwonted and conquering power.*

F. D. Maurice, on being asked the question, "What is sin?" referred his inquirer not to the first Epistle of John, but to the letter to the Ephesians. Now, what have you there? A definition of sin? No. A description? Not in the least. What then? Why, you see Jesus in the sweet and unbroken harmonies of His nature, in the perfect righteousness of His consummate character, in all the glory of His resurrection power; and the soul dead in trespass and sin is quickened and roused, inspired to crave, not a mere avoidance of wrong, or the non-violation of law, but to be conformed

* Cf. T. H. Green, "Prolegomena to Ethics," p. 217 *et seq.*

to the image of Christ, to achieve, possess, the "mind" that was in Christ, to sit with Him in the heavenlies and share not only His unbroken calm and perfect rest, but also, and chiefly, His stainless purity, absolute obedience, and thorough consecration. Whether, then, we look at the gradual elevation of the standard of conduct for society, or at the aspiration, ideal, and achievement of the Christian, we behold ever accumulating proof of the present-day ministry of the Spirit of God.

I need only linger for a moment to remind you that the first century was the *era of universal missionary enterprise*. Christian men could not be held back. The divine enthusiasm fired all hearts, and away they went, everywhere preaching the word. The love of Christ constrained them, gathered their powers and focussed them on the gigantic task of saving all men. Paul and Barnabas, separated and called by the Spirit to the work of propagating Christianity, and hazarding their lives in doing it, are not singular exceptions, but ordinary types of the stupendous missionary energy with which the administration of the Spirit was charged through and through.

And now look over these last days and summon to the chambers of your fancy the names and figures of some of the successors of the missionary apostles! Think of Carey, vivified by the Puritan sap, nourished, such was his fervour, even by the hard facts of geography, cherishing visions more than divine in his blessed solitude, and going with spendid daring to take possession of India in the name of Christ. Behold Moffat, with his potent concentration, matchless tact

and unexhausted patience, entering Africa to subdue it for the world's King. See him followed by the genial, open, lucid, comprehensive Livingstone, and, later still, by our beloved Comber, a man of radiant sanity and perfect poise, steadfast zeal, and resolute will. See David Brainerd, Henry Martyn, Bishop Patteson, Alexander Duff, and hundreds more, who have made the annals of this century more luminous and inspiring with missionary zeal than any to be found in the long-drawn story of far-shining men!

And still such is the missionary ministry of the Spirit. We feel the labourers are few. A thousand millions have not yet seen the light that shines from the face of Jesus; doors open on all sides and pressing invitations reach us from all quarters. And we pray the Lord the Spirit, to thrust out more and more labourers into the harvest-field. The work is ours. The command is in the present tense, and it is uttered with present and felt energy. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This is the missionary day the Lord of all souls has made: and in it we will rejoice and be glad.

But one of the most assured evidences of the teaching ministry of the Spirit *is the simplification of the problem of religion and the opening up of the treasures of revelation to all men.* Christ is once more announced as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The old intellectual haziness disappears. The true light now shineth, which, coming into the world, lighteth every man. Burdensome rituals are abolished, for "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing"; "a new creature, the faith that works by love," "keeping

the commandments of God"; these are all and in all. The priest of Judaism is displaced by the universal priesthood of believers. The traditions of the elders are of none effect, as guides and conditions, although interesting and instructive as records; the letter of theology takes its rank amongst the merely intellectual treasures of men, and the Spirit that guides into all truth is aiding us to make our own theology for our own age, set out in our own speech, and enriched with all the fulness of the revelation of God. There is one message to deliver, short, simple, direct, emphatic, and easily apprehended, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses." One fact has to be made known, a convincing, all-revealing fact, "Christ crucified"; the power of God, the redemption of man; the wisdom of God, the guidance of man; the love of God, the life of man; and the righteousness of God, the character of man.

Moreover, in that day there was a revelation of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge contained in the Old Testament. As the Apostles went amongst their fellows they proved that Christ was the ideal presented by prophet and psalmist, and so the Old Testament became again a quickening force in the life of the world. Is not an analogous process taking place now? Forced by the severities of criticism to open our Testaments, Old and New, we see new wealth in our ancient Scriptures and quickening meaning in the details of the life of the Son of God, and richer spiritual revelations in the whole manifestation of God to Israel and the world. Verily the same Spirit which made the old book new and simplified the religious life to one problem—personal

trust in God as revealed in Christ, is at work to-day, freeing us from the oppression of creeds and helping us to see a straight way to the heart of God, through the love that speaks to us in the sacrifice of Christ.

We admit and deplore the ascent of priestism to power, and the departure in some quarters from the simplicity that is in Christ; but the conviction is deepening and extending that the way of salvation is by personal trust in the personal Christ, that the Christian life begins in the exercise of a spirit of faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Elaborate ritual, formulæ of theology, the intervention of priests are not "the way of salvation." "Where the spirit of the Lord Jesus is, there is liberty." He is sole Saviour, sole Master, sole Priest; all and in all. The truth makes men free from the authority of their fellows and delivers them over in glad subjection to Him who is Himself the Truth Incarnate. Whatever men say now, it is certain that when they come to understand fully the service of the Spirit in cleansing Christian truth of the huge accretions of past centuries, and setting it forth in its original and New Testament simplicity, they will rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is their reward in the Lord the Spirit.

Moreover, may I not ask from whence, think you, comes the rousing of our solicitudes for the social welfare of our fellows and the quickening of interest in all measures of social reform? Whence but from that Spirit whose "gracious ministration" revealed the unspeakable worth of the human unit, lifted the slave to a seat by the side of his master at the Supper of Love, surrounded women with a halo of purity and

dignity, took up the little child and blessed it, saying: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Church of Christ is the natural home of all great and forlorn causes; the training ground for staunch combatants with the new forms of old and subtle evils; the creator of that moral prowess that refuses to let any wrong alone. As Christians we cannot sink from the rank of heroes into the crowd for whom the heroes fight and die—God means us to be heroic and to do noble service.

> "High device is still the highest force,
> And he who holds the secret of the wheel
> May make the rivers do what work he would."

We cannot believe that we have reached the final stage of human progress whilst there is a wrong to be righted, an error to be exposed, a soul to be saved, or a character to be built up in righteousness and truth. We agree with Bushnell that "the soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul"; but we know the Son of God was manifested to destroy all the works of the devil, and, therefore, though the hugeness of our social difficulties may strike us with a temporary moral fatigue, yet we see our task, and recognize with increasing definiteness and distinctness that the ministration of the Spirit is Absolutely without limit, saves and saves to the uttermost, from sin and all its social occasions and social consequences.

When the Mont Cenis tunnel was being made, the workers began to bore from both sides at once, from the Swiss and the Italian, and so came to the centre; in like manner the redeeming service of God works from the centre to the circumference, and also from every segment of the circumference, and along each radius to the

living soul at the centre. But it is in these last days we have received the impact of the Spirit by which we start from the circumference to get to the centre.

Add to and penetrate all this work with the life-giving presence of an immortal hope, and you have carried this service of the Spirit to the maximum of effectiveness. Christianity is the re-birth of hope. The world renews its youth in the Gospel of Christ, shakes off its decrepitude, and goes forth like a strong man to run a race. The Eternal Leader is never out of sight, and the battle cry rings from camp to camp. "The Lord is at hand." "Maranatha." "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

We are as confident as ever of final success. There is no misgiving, no bewilderment as to the work waiting to be done. Defeats do not baffle us nor delays dishearten us. The future belongs to the Spirit, and to us through the Spirit. To-day is as yesterday, but more abundant in spiritual energy, in wise advices, in practical work, in clear thought and confident guidance for men. We are saved, strengthened, and purified by hope.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not anxious to treat the evils round about us as though they did not exist; the selfishness that may nestle in the craving for spiritual comfort, the love of pampered ease that comes with material prosperity, the surrender of large ideas due to frequent defeat, the cowardice that seems natural after increase of tasks, the growth of grave errors, and the pride and self-will that mark the spirit of the age—I admit and deplore all; but I wish to urge you and myself to a more real and soul-filling faith in

the one God. Believe in Him, in His fulness of being and of manifestation. Believe in God the Father. He is the living and loving Creator and Ruler. Believe also in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Saviour; but also and specially believe in the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son. His ministry is the most real, actual, all-pervasive, renewing and eternal force working on the earth at this hour.

Say you it is invisible? Sunbeams are invisible till they impinge on earthly particles. The red, the blue, and the yellow are not the light itself, but reflected fragments of light as it is broken in sky, and bush, and sea; so the work of the Spirit is unseen, but it falls on our human souls, and aspirations are born carrying us from the letter to the spirit, from the form to the life, from self to God; impatience is begotten of the narrow expediencies of a self-centred existence, and of an irritating slackness and lethargy in the face of gigantic evils; the ideas of Christ, bold, majestic, exalted, are made ours, and the spirit of Christ becomes the supreme controlling and decisive force in all our being and doing; so the Spirit ministers truth and life, health and freedom, energy and grace.

Dear friends, rejoice in the work of God; welcome the opportunities before you. You are the creation of the regenerating Spirit. Work together with God. Make your fellowship strong, glad, wise, loving, magnetic. "Walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Obey the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ. "Be ye holy as God who has called you is holy." Breathe the spirit of Him who died on the cross for men; save souls; convey in the clear language of life the message

of God in his revelation. Heal the sick, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, cast out devils; "freely ye have received, freely give." Hope to the end for the revelation to be made to you at the appearing of Jesus Christ, and if at any time faith grows feeble, and zeal flags, and despair threatens, remember Him who said: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!"

Believe in the Holy Spirit, the creator of the ideal society, the source of the fullest life, the fountain of holiness, the fire of evangelical zeal, the ever-fresh teacher of truth, the messenger of social recovery and perfection, the birth of saving hope — a sevenfold ministry, "nearer to us than our breathing, closer than hands and feet."

THE COMING THEOLOGY.*

FATHERS and brethren, nineteen years ago, I spoke to you from this Chair on "Jesus Christ and Modern Social Life." Privileged to speak to you once more as your Chairman, I choose a theme as difficult as it is urgent, as momentous in its issues as it is fitting to the hour; and with at least this advantage for me, that it is in the line of the addresses I have recently given as President of the Baptist Union. That subject is "The Coming Theology; or, the Primitive Christian Faith, the Source and Basis of a Living and Progressive Christian Theology."

But I feel it would be ungracious to enter upon this discussion without first expressing the sincere gratitude I feel for the confidence and affection which prompted you to call me to this office a second time. I am deeply grateful. I belong to you, and count it the chief distinction of my public life that I have been permitted to serve you so long. Forty years ago last Monday but one, I was baptized and received into one of your village churches — churches of men, women, and children "called to be saints," made venerable and lovely as "habitations of God"; the sacred places where our faithful forerunners

* The Address from the Chair of the General Baptist Association, Burnley, Lancashire, June 23, 1891.

> "Schooled themselves by vigil, fast and prayer,
> And learnt to love as Jesus loved,
> And bore the cross that poor men bare."

You led me as a lad to attempt the preaching of the Gospel, trained me in your College, and sent me to minister to the church where I have laboured for nearly one-third of a century. But the time fails me to tell the debt I owe to you, to your generous sympathy and kindly forbearance, to your churches, and to your institutions; and now you compel a fuller gratitude by this new sign of your unabated and refreshing love. I thank you with all my heart.

But I may not forget that we meet under circumstances of deep solemnity as well as of much inspiration. Since we last gathered in Annual Assembly, some of our beloved fellow-workers have received their translation to the rest of God and as we look up, the windows of Heaven open, and we catch glimpses of our glorified comrades who only yesterday served in the same ranks and delivered the same message. Of two of our ascended companions, John Batey and John Alcorn, both "wearing the white flower of a blameless life," we are reminded as we meet in this building and accept the hospitality of the church with which they were so long and so honourably identified. The first was resolute and devoted, bright and sunny, aggressive and useful, even into old age. The second was eloquent of speech, true in faith, intensely evangelical in teaching, and consecrated to work. The former was the founder and first pastor of this church, and the second led and nourished it for nine years. Together, like twin stars, they flash the light caught from the face of the Saviour on our life, and wake and cheer us in our "unhasting, unresting" service.

That we are in the true succession of the Apostles, and need such stimulus as these and kindred examples offer, may be inferred from the difficulties that still beset our path as citizen Christians, as Nonconformists, and as a Connexion of churches of Jesus Christ. Difficulty is the salt and sign of life.

> "Difficulty! 'tis
> Life's healthful tide; in a dead, waveless sea,
> What thing could live? It is the bracing wind
> That energizes every faculty."

Churches without difficulties are mostly churches void of pith and courage, without eyes or ears, heart or soul, experience or expansion. They have a name to live, and they should make much of it, for it is all they have —they themselves are dead or dying. In our difficulties God writes our problems, by them rouses us from our lethargy, compels to greater exertion and finer achievement, makes manifest that He needs us, and will use us if we are alert to read His teaching and prompt and brave in obeying it. The difficulties of the Churches have been the precursors and prophecies of their victorious advance, from the days of the Apostles to the days of the Puritans, from the struggles of Luther and the battles of Knox to the fortitude of William Carey and the heroic daring of David Livingstone. With all its perils, then, such a time as ours is auspicious, rich in opportunities for faith and love, for self-suppression and self-sacrifice, full of promise for us and our Churches, and for the nation through the Churches, of quickened zeal, increased responsibility, cleansed thought, and extended usefulness. We stand as a community, at the close of a truly memorable year, and look into the coming days with their perils

and with their joys, not without misgiving for ourselves lest in anything we should displease our Judge, but with a mighty hope for man in His grace, and a strong and pure desire to glorify Him in His Churches, by making them more and more the true servants and the perfect organs of His everlasting kingdom.

Four years ago we were challenged to show our love of Christian unity by *doing* something to promote it. From the Chair of our Baptist Union came the appeal to terminate a denominational division that has existed since the beginning of the seventeenth century. The General and Particular Baptists, starting from different theological and geographical centres, fed and nourished on different theological diet, formed themselves into distinct and opposed camps, and moved forward as separate battalions, often far apart and sometimes in collision, advancing up to the end of the last century as though they were parallel lines, within sight of one another, but destined never to meet. Yet, slowly, shyly, and surely, the Baptists of England have been coming together in the last half-century—with fear and with trembling, no doubt, lest the truth should suffer or precious memories be slighted and nourishing friendships rudely sundered; yet, with the certainty of step and cordiality of feeling that suggested the potent spell of an invisible and irresistible enchantress. Without any weak hankering for peace, or cowardly blurring of principles, or ungrateful forgetfulness of heroic leaders, or foolish craving for theoretic completeness, or any faithless haste and inconsiderateness, heart has grown to heart, spirit to spirit, till it is safe to say they feel as they have never done before the impulse of a genuine fellowship of ideas, the glow of an actual

spiritual brotherhood, the attractions of a common love, and the inspiration of a common service.

Therefore when the Rev. Charles Williams pleaded for a visible recognition of this widely-diffused intellectual and spiritual oneness, we readily accepted the challenge. We could do nothing else. All our nineteenth-century traditions, the actions of our fathers, of our most influential Churches, and of our institutions, pointed straight to the goal of a complete and thoroughgoing union; and therefore by the mediation of the Baptist Union, to which we both belong, the last two years have been marked by the most decided and signal advances in organic fellowship. Nothing could possibly exceed the grace and beauty of the action of the Baptist Missionary Society, or the magnanimity and heartiness of the officers, committee, and constituency both of that organization, and of the Baptist Union. If the worth and efficiency of a partnership depended upon the spirit in which it is entered, then I must say the leaders in this movement have adorned it with unspeakable loveliness, and given solid guarantees of its immense serviceableness by the courtesy and consideration, frankness and wholeheartedness, with which they have promoted it.

I am aware that every difficulty has not yet been surmounted; but we may confidently expect the grace that has guided us so happily and successfully hitherto, will not forsake us. We meet in the name of the Lord Jesus: ours is essentially a spiritual gathering—a gathering of the Churches of the Saviour—and if our faith as Free-Churchmen is not a figment, He is in the midst of us, and will help us to see what is best for His Kingdom. It is His spirit that fills and unifies the

Churches. The question we have to answer He Himself has set us. It comes not from *us*, but from *Him*, and it is to Him we have to give answer, and therefore we may be sure He will aid us to give one which is the clear echo of His voice.*

Nor has He set the problem only to us. It is before all Christians and all Churches, and forms part of a wide-spread movement for a true Catholic unity. The increase of the Kingdom of God by the increase of denominations has reached its maximum. No sane Christian will attempt to create another sect. The reconstruction of religious denominations on purely theological lines is as impossible as the return of yesterday. All attempts fail. Plymouthism and Christadelphianism demonstrate that there is no swifter or surer road to strife and disunion. Growth by division has ceased. Growth by federation, fusion, is the next development of the work of the Spirit.

In England the Presbyterians were, a little while ago, two "bodies," with two names, two separate sets of machinery, and no radical and real difference of belief or practice "They two have become one flesh," with *one* name, and as an organization they are complete, and have gained incalculably in compactness, aggressiveness and efficiency by the union. Methodists are gravitating towards a similar centre, and are as sure to reach it at no very distant date as the sun is sure to set in the west; and everybody who knows

* The answer was given in a most hearty and united manner two days afterwards, and so arrangements were completed for effecting the union of two bodies of Christians, starting from different theological centres, at the beginning of the seventeenth century (the "Generals" in 1611-12, and the "Particulars" in 1633), and moving along separate lines till June 25, 1891.

anything of the rural districts will pray that this Methodist consolidation may come soon. I cannot imagine any one believes the partition wall between the two branches of Congregationalism an eternal structure. Surely there is some way of making both one; without any faithlessness to truth, and with much advantage to charity and Christian progress. Is there not also a strong yearning for a Congress of all the Free Churches, and have we not a beautiful manifestation of the same spirit in the forthcoming International Council of the Congregationalists in London? When once Christianity is delivered from the divisive influence of State patronage, the union and federation of the Churches of the Saviour in work for the redemption of man will proceed at a swifter pace. The trend of human life, and therefore of modern Church life, is energetically towards unity; (1) in the broadest and loosest way, by conference on common questions; (2) next by the federation of organizations, each society retaining its autonomy and doing its own work; and (3) by the actual fusion and consolidation of institutions and connexions that have no better reasons than sentiment or tradition for keeping apart. The Church of the future cannot be splintered and sundered. It must be one, with as vivid and arresting a oneness as that which obtains in the manifold and ever-revealing nature of God, made manifest in the life and history of His Son.* May such a union speedily come that the world may know, with a sure and undoubting knowledge, that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of all men!

* See a most able article in the *Independent* on "The English Church of the Future: its Polity," March 6th, 1891. Cf. also *Homiletical Review*, June, 1891, on "The Federation of Churches."

It ought to be a strange and surprising thing to have to inquire into the cause or causes of such a singular phenomenon. But it is not, and therefore we must do it. For although no process is so natural, so indisputably according to the mind of Christ, so exactly after the pattern of primitive Christianity, yet we are startled by it, and have to account for it; to track the magnetic forces by which the Churches of the Redeemer are being drawn into such cordial and loving relations with one another.

In some quarters it is suggested that this craving for closer fellowship is the sinister offspring of indifference to vital and necessary evangelic truth. That I cannot believe, for sincerity was never more highly prized or more courageously sought. Men are still martyrs to their convictions, though they are not put in prison, and the fires do not burn their bodies to extinguish their opinions. Reality, inward reality, is the pearl of great price. Of course there may be hypocrites in every community, and men who will sell their soul for the pay of the priest's office in every Church; but, speaking generally of Christian men and Christian teachers, never was the pursuit of truth more fearless and vigorous, or the utterance of it more frank and free. The passion for truth is supreme. We shrink from the shadow of a *seeming* assent to ancient forms of speech, if we regard them as suggesting doctrines in which we have no faith, and will suffer much rather than that the slightest stain should fall on the garments of our Christian integrity. Bowing in the temple of Rimmon was never in more odium than now.

Is not the coming unity traceable, then, to the blind desire for a monotonous uniformity characteristic of

much of the life of our day? In no sense or degree! That fashion has spent itself in the Churches. They have been "benumbed" by it, and are restive under all the remnants of its influence. They covet variety, flexibility, freedom, life. Even the Anglican sect, which passed the Act of Uniformity, is as rebellious as any, and has more internal contradiction than all the other Churches put together.

Is it, then, the "spirit of the age," the growing sense of the oneness of humanity, of the solidarity of the race of men, and the general diffusion of a more human and therefore a more Christian spirit throughout the Churches? No doubt it is so! But then these phenomena point to the effect whose cause we have to seek, and are due to the same intellectual and spiritual forces. *They all spring from that substantial unity in thinking and in belief of the Christians of this day on the fundamental facts of Christianity;* and their increasing harmony in the interpretation of the Gospel, and the translation of its capital ideas in the polity and action of the Churches. It is the universal gravitation of the Churches of Christendom towards the faith of "the Great Forty Years"; the gradual, but inevitable, surrender of the seventeenth-century theology, and a real, if unconscious or sub-conscious, advance to the theology of the New Testament; the gravitation of that great party in all the Churches—free and fettered, sacerdotal (as seen in "Lux Mundi") and non-sacerdotal, Episcopal and Congregational—to the Divine Original of Christianity, in His ideas, in His forces, and in His institutions; to Him whom God has appointed heir of all things and by whom He made and leads all the ages. Ideas unite. Creeds divide. Ideas make souls akin. Catechisms

and formulas separate. Scattered Germany is fused into a conquering unity by an idea. Puritanism transfigured one epoch of world history, and prepared for another, by the grandeur of its ideas. Ideas concerning God and His revelation in Christ bind the souls of men in an inseparable union. The Spirit has led the Churches back to Christ, and restored them to Himself and His thought and work, and they cannot get into completer accord with His aim and will without coming into closer fellowship with each other in spirit and service. We have found our true centre, and must therefore find one another!

I do not contend that Christians generally are fully conscious of this theological change. A living theology is not only about God, but is of God, proceeds from His dwelling in men, in the reason and heart, in the conscience and will, and is the interpretation of the whole life of man and men through the idea of God. Therefore, it is always in the religious consciousness before it is articulate. It is experience and thought and reason before it is speech. It is in the spirit before it is in print; in souls before it is in systems; in societies of free men living religiously, thinking truly, and reasoning soundly before it is announced in confessions and sung in creeds. It is implicit before it is explicit; a body of working ideas preceding and pioneering a set of massed and ordered, balanced and coherent truths. As we have languages before grammar, song and then the science of harmony, argument first and logic next, so there is a life of God in Christian Churches before there is a Christian theology, a science of that life, and an assurance to the reason of its perfect truth and

authority. In all the Churches there are, whether expressed or not, the elements and contents of the coming theology, freely operative in some, patiently endured in others, suspiciously watched in a third, sincerely and fiercely resisted in a fourth, but pressing in through every pore of the "body of Christ," and affecting its entire life like a bracing and penetrating atmosphere; and irresistible because they are not of man, but of God, the Leader of our intellectual life—the spiritual Teacher and Trainer of Mankind.

More acutely than ever do we feel that there is a theological revolution at the doors. We tread apprehensively and breathe nervously as not at all sure what may come through the doors when once they are opened. By a thousand signs it is clear that our world has changed. It is not the same we came into only a little while ago, and it is scarcely recognizable as being like that in which our stout crusading fathers fought for love of God and not for gold, and spoke with tremorless certainty concerning His "eternal counsels" and "righteous decrees" and "saving truth." We can as easily bring back the days of Augustine and Ambrose, of St. Bernard and St. Francis, as of Andrew Fuller and Dan Taylor. Ideas make our real world, and amongst all our revolutions none are so deep and so radical as that in ideas. Of course, persons are more than ideas. They are the supreme forces. The living will is king of kings; but next in rank and power to souls come ideas; and they rule us with a force that goads us till we translate them into action. Ideas set in motion have weight, and therefore momentum, and their momentum is as enormous as their monarchy is real and abiding. And of all ideas, those concerning God and

man, man and his world, his history, his duty, his sin, his redemption, his social development are the most creative, and the most regal, and set in motion those great revolutions in the political and ecclesiastical and theological history which go marching and conquering through the centuries; and this even when there is neither clear speech nor fit language, and their voice is only faintly heard; for their line goes out through all the earth, and their force to the end of the world: in them hath the Creator set a tabernacle for the sun of progress, "which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Some of us regret this change. We do not like to be disturbed by new ideas. We resent the drafts they make on our courage and patience, and some of us, like Saul of Tarsus, are in danger of becoming exceedingly mad against those who cannot be quiet about the results of Biblical criticism, the upheavals of theological thought, and the grounds of certitude in philosophy and in religion. Men say it is the dawning of the spring, and assure us "the wealth and festal pomps of midsummer lie in the heat of this inglorious day," but we call to mind the bracing frosts and exhilarating sports on the ice, and are reluctant to open the doors to the genial warmth lest it should relax nerve, soften hardy strength, and diminish toil. Others speak as if they had suffered from the long winter of their discontent and were impatient for the sunnier spring; but whatever the mood, all witness to the radical character and broad sweep of the change. The conception of the

universe is recast. Space has peopled its vast emptiness. Time has unloosed and unrolled many pages of its long and unknown story.* History is seen in a new light. The ages and the races have given up their buried stores and reported a few of their secrets. The wide earth has welcomed the reporter, and the newspaper is ubiquitous. Religion is found in every land and time, and our Bible is seen to be the richest and divinest, and yet the most human, of books. Churches declare they are "always the same," and yet give undeniable evidence of mighty transformations. A Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church says Romanists do not consider the acceptance of the Romanist doctrine essential to salvation.

Some of you remember the picture of "The Last Judgment" in the Sistine Chapel at Rome, painted by that holy man of genius, at once saint and artist, Michael Angelo. Christ is the central figure, and He is driving the wicked to their final woe. It is a great and terrible painting. Not a gleam of pity is in that eye, no sign of tenderness in the face; it is wrath, and wrath, and only wrath. To-day Art is busy in a hundred studios representing the real tenderness and divine pity that shine in the face of Christ. Dr. McCosh, speaking of the revision of the Westminster Catechism, says: "There is danger in stirring up this matter, but there is more danger in ignoring it or postponing it. . . . There is a want in our Confession of a clear and prominent utterance, such as we have in the Scrip-

* It has been affirmed that these expressions are "vague." I mean by them, that instead of thinking of our globe as six thousand years old we now regard its story as covering cycles on cycles of ages: in short, I am referring to the changes effected in our ideas of the universe by the sciences of astronomy and geology and by the hypothesis of Evolution.

tures everywhere, of the love of God to all men, and of the free gift of Jesus Christ and of salvation to all men, not to the elect alone. I find that some of our best and soundest young men are turned from their inclination to enter upon the ministry, or, having entered upon it, are annoyed and hindered by a few obnoxious phrases that keep staring them in the face, and by the absence of the complete recognition of the infinite love and mercy of God. . . . Our Confession meets the heresies of the seventeenth century, but not the heresies of the nineteenth. I confess, too, that I should like to have in the Presbyterian Church a shorter and clearer creed than the Westminster Confession. Our theologians do not accept it as a whole. Among the theological seminaries some reject one part, some reject another, all reject something."

Professor Briggs, who knows that Catechism better than any living man, not only demonstrates its defects, but shows that its defenders have added to it such mistakes of their own that, though they call themselves the champions of "orthodoxy," they are, in fact, the authors and leaders of a most mischievous "heterodoxy."* The schools of Bruce and Dods in Scotland, and of Andover in America, witness to strong currents of progress, and foretell the speedy arrival of a theological renaissance. We do not refute Augustine and Pelagius, Calvin and Arminius; we study them, thank them, and leave them.† We preach the sovereignty of God; but seeing it is the sovereignty of the God of Jesus Christ, we proclaim it as the sovereignty of reason

* Cf. "Whither? A Theological Question for the Times." By C. A. Briggs, D.D.

† That is, we leave their theological *systems;* all that is devotionally stimulating and exegetically accurate we still value as of true service.

and of righteousness and of love, and insist at the same time on the full responsibility of each soul of man to live according to the light he sees, and obey the law he hears. In short, the seventeenth century theological thinking will be as far removed from the collective consciousness of the Churches of the next century as the mysticism of the Middle Ages is from us.

Now, reasoning men cannot live on the wind. Man must theologize. He does. He will. Therefore, if the old theology is going, or gone, the new is coming, or come. An unorganized and partly-articulate body of living ideas, which has already proved its superiority to the ancient creeds, to time-worn prescription and sectarian parties, will soon find full voice and clear enunciation, without despising or forgetting anything of value in the theologies or institutions which have been the result, and the agents of the spiritual life of the past. That theology which is in an unconscious or sub-conscious state, will enter upon one of lucid and aggressive consciousness. It will be new and yet old; new as the spring, but old as the earth; new as each lover's experience is new, but old as love, and sorrow, and faith, and hope are old; and the Churches will let fall the sere and yellow leaves of the departed winter, and appear clad in beauty, and fired with the strength of their larger and ampler life. No religious factor of the present hour has in it so much promise of spiritual energy and moral effectiveness as the Coming Theology of the Churches of Christ.

Moreover, it is a mistake to imagine that this constructive work is not necessary or can be indefinitely postponed. Far from it. The need is urgent and im-

mediate. The old questions are not strange to man's heart because he cannot use the old phrases or find satisfaction in the old answers. He still asks, "What is religion?" "Can we be sure of God?" May we know something of the fathomless mystery of His being? By what methods may we be certain of His voice? What is the way He deals with the awful tragedy of our sin, and the ending of it, for surely we may hope it will end? Who will give us an authentic interpretation of the widening wondrous world, of the deep and populous starry spaces, of the chequered and chaotic annals of our race, of the miracles of redemption and renewal, of the growth and decay of character, of the evolution of social life, and of the future of humanity? You can no more stop such questions than you can quench thought, and you can no more answer them without theology than you can live without air.

I know theology is thought to be a waning science. Long since Feuerbach spoke of it as an anachronism; and Strauss and Comte and their satellites bade us regard theological science and its doctrines "as lying at the point of death." Some Christians confounding the counterfeit with the genuine article, and estimating the resources and value of the theological mint by the worn-out currency coming into their hands, have spoken of it as a closed study, and suggested that its students should be sent to master ethics and history, political economy and sociology; or they bid us be content to satisfy man's fevered craving for rest and solace, for the poetry and pathos of human life. Do anything they say to us—anything rather than theologize!

Two elements in our age have caused this temporary eclipse of the theological sun. First, this is mainly a

period of searching criticism and ceaseless analysis. It is not a constructive epoch in any large degree. The scalpel and the scissors are at work from morning till night. Microscopes and telescopes, tests and re-agents are in full swing. We vivisect. That is our distinction. We are collecting materials, and have not time to arrange and classify, to co-ordinate and systematize. Nor is that critical impulse spent; apparently it has much to do and far to go, upwards and downwards and outwards; and nowhere further or deeper or higher than in the realm of religion. But what appears as the death and interment of theological science is actually and only a prolonged preparation for its largest and fullest life.

Again, delay in this constructive work is caused by the bewildering opulence of our present-day knowledge. Men are dazed by the brilliant revelations of science; awed by the vast stores of human history, perplexed by the records of comparative religion, the contents of the world's sacred books, and the annals of the world's sacred institutions. The discovery of Greek literature was the resurrection of Europe; and yet that discovery, important as it was, cannot be compared with the gifts of God to this age in complexity and variety, in their true values, in moral and spiritual momentum. It is undeniable that the legacy of knowledge the nineteenth century will leave its successor will be the greatest birth of time.

Is it surprising, then, that the theological students of our day should falter where our fathers firmly trod, and that young men, even if they are saintly and gifted as John Calvin, should despair of being able to

form a comprehensive and systematic statement of the Christian faith at twenty-three years of age? Theology is the science of sciences. It is not eclectic but universal. It omits nothing, but embraces and assimilates all knowledge, and who in these days is sufficient for such things? Still, let us not fear. The God of Peter, and Paul, and John, of Philip and Cornelius, of Athanasius and Augustine, of Anselm and Aquinas, of Echardt and Tauler, of Luther and Calvin, is Himself the Creator of every new departure in Theology, and He is preparing the theologian of the twentieth century, who gathering into himself the cosmical and biological, social and theological knowledge of these later days, and using all he has acquired in obedience to the visions of God in Christ Jesus, shall prepare the way for a fresh expansion and enrichment of the theological, moral, and religious life of the world.

"Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward! let us range;
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."

"God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world."

To deny theology and praise ethics is as absurd as to celebrate the centenary of Faraday and despise original research; or use the telegraph and pour contempt on the science that led to its creation. Man is rational, and he will not long obey where he does not securely believe. Conduct is three-fourths of life; and conduct is religion's chief concern; but the whole of conduct is dependent on emotion, and both are dependent on knowledge. The poet says "We live by admiration, hope, and love," but you must have a conception of the beautiful you admire, of the fruition for which you hope, and of the person or thing you love. Thought

determines feeling. Ideas rule life. You will get a poor obedience for a ruler who affronts your reason. Ethical codes must be written on tables of stone, based on the solid rock of truth. "Life," said an early Christian apologist, "is not real without knowledge; nor is knowledge safe without life; they must be planted together like the trees in Paradise." Christ crucified is for Paul "the wisdom of God" as well as "the power"; a theology as well as an ethic; a "way" and a "truth" as well as a "life," a light as well as a love, a certainty for the reason as well as sweet peace for the conscience, healing balm for the wounded heart, and a baptism of power for the will. The reason must be illuminated and assured about the riddle of this perplexed earth, by the religion that seeks to carry men to that "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control" which "alone lead life to sovereign power."

Man cannot always be cheated or put off. He knows that agnosticism is not bread; but only a device for warning the hungry that you do not know whether there is any bread, or if there be, where it is, or how it may be got. Emotional glow and the stir of the passions may make him forget his hunger for the revelation of God; but the pains of hunger will seize him again, and he will cry out for the living God. Life discovers to him that truth and conduct are not two, but one, and if he is denied the first, he gets on ill with the second. Seemingly a chaos, he is really a unity, and must move altogether if he is to move towards the higher and nobler life. Let him believe that he lives in an unmoral or immoral world, and it is certain he will not be a moral man. Give him a false religion, and it will be a miracle indeed if he is a true man. At bottom, life

rests on thought; and ethics and theology are warp and woof of the same web of human experience. Names left out, it is demonstrable that the actual and living theology of an age is the very bread of its life, the mainstay of its moral advancement, and the strength of its conscience, and the source of whatever enthusiasm it has for right and good. While man is man he will seek ordered, verified truth, and will really live by his actual theology.

But *how* shall he obtain this precious boon? By what route shall he travel to this true thought concerning God? What is the method of the Coming Theology?

Few sights are more interesting than the mystic but real fellowship of the multitudes of workers in the fields of science. The custodians of physical knowledge are knit together in common pursuits and form one republic all over the globe. Their laboratories are numberless. Their tools vary from the spectroscope to the dynamo. Their materials differ from the wings of the bee to the crater of a volcano, and from the constituents of the sun to the invisible currents of electricity. Some of them are specialists, and give a lifetime to the investigation of one family of animals, one order of plants, or one class of salts or acids. Dallinger studies the infinitely little. Lockyer tells us how the sun is made. Professor Crookes and Dr. Gladstone investigate chemical phenomena. Lankester and Milnes Marshall are biologists; but with this multitudinous variety their *method* is one—one in America and England, in New Zealand and Norway, in Germany and in the heart of Africa; and the work of each scientist, be he botanist or zoolo-

gist, physicist or astronomer, geologist or chemist, is a welcome addition to the whole sum of knowledge, and makes more manifest the complete unity of the universe.*

Nor is there anything more prophetic about the Coming Theology than the strong indications of an approaching agreement amongst the countless workers in the fields of religion as to the way that theology will come and the *method* by which its contents are to be obtained and verified. With all our differences, and some of them are provokingly vital, there is a growing oneness as to the road to religion, the means of being sure as to its basis, its object, its contents, and its goal. The students are many, and instruments and materials exceedingly diverse. One collects and collates manuscripts; a second translates and expounds inscriptions in Assyria, Egypt, and Phrygia; a third disinters the thought of the far-away Buddhist, helps us to listen to his ethics and admire his self-sacrifice; a fourth traces the history and evolution of Christian dogma along the course of the Christian generations; a fifth and sixth investigate the influence of Greece and Rome on the original ideas and forces of the evangelic faith. A growing number courageously pursue the quest of the origin and grounds of religious thought and life, and subject their contents and results to the severest tests. To find the actual beginnings of the four Gospels, the very words of the Son of Man, allures a few: † whilst

* Sir James Paget says, "As the rays of knowledge have extended and diverged, so has their relation to one common centre become more evident, and the unity of Nature has become more significant of the unity of God."

† Cf. Prof. J. T. Marshall, M.A., Dr. Sanday, Dr. Resch, in *Expositor* for 1891.

a larger company seeks to express the essential principles of the Christianity of Christ in the latest forms of human thought and inquiry. But these leaders, and all their fellow-workers are gravitating with increasing speed towards one and the same method of work; a method that is intrinsically scientific, ignores no actual knowledge, contains the best guarantees for certitude, and offers both its processes and results to the amplest verification.

What that *method* is will be seen best in the answers given to the all-inclusive question—"What is religion?" "How may we assure ourselves of the truth of its contents?" "What is the place of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ amongst these answers?"

Four responses are given to these inquiries. The first is that of the young and growing science of Comparative Religion; the second that of the disciples of Schleiermacher; the third that of Lessing and the Elsmerists, and the fourth is that of Ritschl, and his conscious and unconscious followers at home and abroad. The first starts with the accumulated stores of the world's religions, sifts and arranges their contents, accepts the principles in which they all concur, as constituting the true religion; and follows the canon, "where these world religions agree they are right, where they disagree they are likely to be wrong." The second starts from within the man, from his feelings and emotional experiences; from what he is, and needs, and yearns and strives to be and do, and builds up the religion which will satisfy him, and in satisfying him, will prove the truth. The third starts from above; shows what the universe is, and what man is in it, and towards it; and deduces from that an absolute religion

of eternal spiritual truths to be believed and enjoyed. For it, religion is not rooted in historical facts, events, books, and institutions; it is independent of history. "Each individual," says Lessing, "finds his faith in himself before he seeks it in Scripture." "Truth of history can in no case be a proof for eternal truths of reason."*

So the distinctive note of this answer is that it lifts the stress from the historical character of Christianity, and declares that it has enough, if it has ideas, since it is only concerned with the absolute and eternal. The fourth answer goes directly to that highest embodiment of religion—Christ Jesus, and finds (1) in Him the eternal ideas of the third answer incarnated and illuminated; (2) the emotional experiences and magnetic ideals of the second answer interpreted and promoted; and (3) the various religions of the ages explained, absorbed, purified, and crowned. Not by speculation or metaphysics, not through any system of philosophy, or any general view of the world, but in and by the actual Christ of history may men come to religion and to the full assurance of understanding, as to its truths; the Christ not of the fancy, nor of the creeds, but the indisputably real Christ of the four Gospels and Epistles; the Founder of Christianity, the Creator of the true, permanent, and universal religion. History is the self-revelation of God; and the supreme test and infallible arbiter of religious truth in history is Jesus Christ. The highest practical conception of religion is in Him, and it is only as we know Him, His ideas, His person and work, that we can give a true and full and sufficient answer to the question, "What is religion?"

* Pfleiderer's "Philosophy of Religion," I. 134—136.

So, instead of drifting away from the historical Christ, earnest and thoughtful students of religion are looking Christward with fixed gaze and a mighty hope. The method of the Coming Theology is expressed in the saying of Paul, "Yea, verily: I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may gain Christ . . . that I may know Him . . . I press on if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."

And that method is strictly and severely scientific. It takes us to facts, and the grounds and reasons of facts. It compels investigation. It demands criticism — "higher" and "lower" alike, for it seeks truth, and will not rest in error. It sustains exegesis, reverent but pitiless. It warrants the most searching inquiries into the literature of the four Gospels to find the very words that came from the lips of the Son of Man; into the ways in which the primitive tradition was at length "set in order" by Luke and his fellow-evangelists. It insists upon a fearless scrutiny of the undisputed correspondence of the Apostle Paul with the Churches at Rome, and Corinth, and Galatia, so that we may know Christ as "the Son of David according to the flesh, and as declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness." Jesus belongs to history; we must, therefore, know Him and it, and His place and part in it. He is a real man—one of us though so far above us; living our life, though living it in so peerless a way: an artisan engaged in the lowest and meanest details of duty, though animated with the sublimest ideals; an unconventional travelling preacher, a brave reformer of religion, a loving companion, and a

faithful martyr; and the first necessity is that we know Him in His habit as He lived, in His mind as He thought, in His spirit as He felt and suffered, and lived and died. A shadowy, unsubstantial figure floating before the fancy will not suffice.

No subordination of historical portraiture to imagined theological or ecclesiastical necessities can be allowed. "Without facts, no ideas; without ideas, virtually no facts; nothing that is a fact for thought, nothing that mind can make any use of."* Though John's prologue stands first in his Gospel, it is not first in his knowledge. "The Word became *flesh*, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." The fact is seen and studied, and then its significance is reported. There is not a sentence in the philosophy of the preface that is not based on the history as found in the evangel. John's method was scientific. Every line concerning the Logos can be traced to its roots and reasons in the facts written by his pen. Devout faith in the Missionary of Cana in Galilee precedes the exalted conclusions concerning the Eternal Word. John, the New Testament "Theologian," knows God by and in the historical Jesus.

Now it is the glory of physical scientists that as science passed from metaphysics to facts, it passed from doubt to certainty; and therefore we may anticipate that as we adopt their method we shall obtain the same reward, and again be convinced that we have not placed our confidence in "cunningly devised fables," but that we have in our Synoptics the facts and ideas accepted and taught by the Christians and Churches, widespread and numerous, who were under the leadership of apostolic men; that the letters of Paul form a series of

* Prof. Flint, "Philosophy of History," p. 28.

links that cannot be broken, fastened into the rock of history; and that the fourth Gospel certainly existed, and was used as early as in the first ten years of the second century.* From the use of the *method* of the Coming Theology men will come saying with as full conviction as joy, "I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed to Him against that day."

Again, this method, which is so severely scientific in its search for the fact and truth, is equally so in range and catholicity. Science is catholic. So is Christ. He is the Son of Adam. His genealogy goes up to the beginning of our race, and therefore He belongs to all its history, and so you cannot go to Him as your final arbiter of religion and leave out any of the experiences, struggles, failures, victories, civilizations, revolutions, laws, theologies, institutions of the race. Christianity is essentially a historical religion. It does not claim to be perfectly original. Its roots are in Judaism; historically and socially it is a development of the contemporary political and religious condition of the Jewish people. The New Testament has a Hebrew basis for all its literature. The student who starts to build his religion with Christ must dig down to and through the strata of the world-thought, collect the fossil forms of ages past, note their sequence, and trace their relation to the life of to-day. He will underrate no knowledge. He is at the summit of life, and embraces within his vision the whole scene beneath, and around, and above.

To-day for him as for Peter the sheet of revelation

* Keim admits that "the fact remains clear that the fourth Gospel actually existed in the time of the Basilides, and that the Gnostics—masters and scholars—eagerly laid hold of the book;" and with this conclusion Renan and Matthew Arnold agree.

is let down from heaven, and the divine voice bids him call nothing common or unclean that God has cleansed. All things are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Owning Him we own all. Following Him we absorb all. Christianity has often been face to face with masses of ideas that seemed alien to its spirit; but it has absorbed and assimilated all that was good in them, and thereby become richer in its gifts, and more able to win and bless humanity. As by a more catholic method, embracing all facts, in all realms, science got rid of "Gorgons and Chimæras dire," banished enervating superstitions, revealed the steadfast order and glorious beauty of the universe, and increased the utilities and comforts of life; so we may confidently expect that the acceptance of the historical Christ as the exponent and authority in religion will suppress the dogmas that veil the face of God, expel the notions that discredit His administration, and fill the realm of revealed truth with such charm and fascination that men, looking therein, will say, "Lo, here is our God; we have waited for him;" doubtless, He is our Father and we are His children.

But you cannot accept this Christocentric historical method without coming on traces of *purpose*, of work done for the sake of reaching a foreseen issue. The ages beat with one ruling aim. Time throbs with a great heart of love. The races of men have a solidarity of interests and hopes, efforts and progress, movement and life. "Throughout the ages one increasing purpose runs." Christ tells us what that purpose is, and supplies the motives and inspirations for fulfilling it. The Christian theology is not, therefore, as Dorner says, merely the exhibition of Christianity as *truth;* it is

more; it is the exhibition of it as truth for *living*, of powers and motives for making character and securing individual and social redemption. We are not mere debaters. We have to live; and "the grace of God hath appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works."

The irrefutable vindication of the new method of studying the old facts of earth and sky, is in the magnificent succession of advantages secured; the invention and discoveries that economize labour, increase the convenience and comforts of existence, and make our material civilization a totally different thing from what it was in the last century. So we have a right to test the Coming Theology by what it will achieve, by its ethical, quickening and spiritual fruits, and to ask those who speak in its name, "What will your theology do? Tell us its uses. What does it say to the awful fact of sin? Can it minister to a mind diseased? Will it make manhood? Can it quench greed? Does it inspire unselfishness?" If the method fail here it will fail fatally. But it will not and cannot. Starting with the Christ of the Cross, you cannot fail to make central to your teaching that Christianity is the religion of redemption, the power of God, and the wisdom of God to the salvation of everyone that believeth. "That God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself—this is the keynote of the Christian dispensation, its luminous

and life-giving message. All religion is the union between man and God; the Christian religion is a re-union, a reinstated fellowship, a redemption. And this redemption centres in the person and work of Christ, the one mediator between God and man."* The Coming Theology will find its crowning vindication in the purified conscience, juster laws, nobler ideas, kinder feelings, stronger ethical inspirations, and wider service of humanity it will effect.

And now, is it possible from what we see around us to give a few hints of *the probable contents and possible conclusions of the theology* derived by this sure method from the primitive Christian faith?

This, at least, is clear, that we shall concur more completely than ever in the saying of Luther, "The foundation of Christianity is in these words, 'All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father, and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth anyone know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.'" Theology, strictly speaking, is Christology, and has for its matter that historical manifestation of God which finds its centre, and realizes its maximum of purity and fulness of grace and truth in His Son.† Christ is Christianity. Therefore, Christ is the subject-matter of Christian theology. Vinet says, "There is a generally diffused feeling that

* Prof. H. B. Smith. "Faith and Philosophy," p. 132.

† It is likely the order of the subjects of theological investigation will be changed. Biblical Theology will take precedence of all other, and in that, New Testament Theology will have the first and finally authoritative place. In Systematic Theology the order will be (1) Jesus, in History, in Idea, and in Faith; (2) Anthropology; (3) Soteriology; (4) Sociology, including Ecclesiology; (5) Eschatology; (6) The conception of God.

Jesus is required, a satisfaction in the thought that He is not far off, and a feeling that any world without Him would be a great and dreadful blank." Nowhere would that blank be so painful, so unspeakably awful, as in the world of theology. He is "the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by Him." "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The essence of Christ's position in Christianity is declared in the words, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, man Himself, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all."

But Christ is not only the God-ward side of man, He is also the man-ward side of God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He is one of many spiritual chiefs, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah; but He is the chiefest of them all, and to Him they all give witness, as of Him all subsequent spiritual leaders give exposition. As He is the Head "in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily"; so He is the Son of Man, the crown and flower of the human race—more lowly than all the sons of men in His spirit, and yet so high that He cannot surrender any of His claims to the highest.

And "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Change, that touches all, leaves Him unaffected. In the essence and spirit of Him, He is always the same. His being is without conflict. His purposes are not broken off. His work is not fragmentary or antagonistic. The aim of His boyhood is that of His latest manhood, and His eternity is the realization of His promise in time. "I must be about My Father's business," says the lad at Jerusalem; at Samaria's well

the language is: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." From the cross comes the cry, "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." We are fitful, inconstant, spasmodic, bright and dark, exalted to-day and depressed yesterday, and our work is desultory, changeful, fractured and splintered into fragments. He never breaks down. He did no sin. Whenever you see Him, He is faultless, steadfast, ready, full, adequate, divine. He is distinguished by the magnitude of His contrasts, and yet His oneness, His perpetual and benignant harmonies and faultless symmetry are the marvel of His character.

"Humanity," says Renan, the French sceptic, "as a whole, presents an assemblage of beings low, selfish, superior to the animal only in this, that their selfishness is more premeditated. But in the midst of this uniform vulgarity pillars rise towards heaven and attest a more noble destiny. Jesus is the highest of these pillars which show to man whence he came and whither he should tend. In Him is condensed all that is good and lofty in our nature."

"Thy name," says Hooykaas, the Dutch sceptic, "shall be the mighty cry of progress in freedom, in truth, in purity, the living symbol of the dignity of man, the epitome of all that is noble, lofty, and holy upon earth."

"About the life and sayings of Jesus," says John Stuart Mill, the English sceptic, "there is a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight which, if we abandon the idle expectation of finding scientific precision where something very different was arrived at, would place the Prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in His

inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast."

Wonderfullest of records is the brief life of the Son of God. Jesus—the beginning of great world movements, the founding of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth; the first step in a limitless progress, the dawning of a new era. In His short "to-day" He associated Himself as by an irresistible energy with all the movements that create hope of better days, with the championing of all lost causes, with the salvation of all lost souls, with the reform of all abuses, and with the inauguration of the reign of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. After His death the men taught by Him instinctively preached Jesus *and* the resurrection; Jesus and self-sacrifice; Jesus and saving missions to all men; Jesus and the uplifting of the slave; Jesus and the ennobling of woman; in fact, there is no question or movement embracing the real welfare of men that is not forthwith tied on to the name and work of the Lord Jesus in that revealing way. Thus has He filled the ages with His fame, until He is in the complex life of London and the Great West, the same "to-day" as He was in the "yesterday" of Palestine and the wide and various East. Nor does death change *Him;* it only widens His sphere, spiritualizes His work, and enthrones His ideas. Indeed, the past of God, the long inner history of God, the eternity of God, of His purpose, love, and truth, have no such manifestation as that which is given us in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Therefore the idea that Jesus *is* the same to-day as He was in His appearing to Israel, regarded merely as a possession of men, "is a thing of beauty, a joy for

ever," a quickening impulse, and a blessed hope. That a Being so full of meekness and courage, of untiring energy and gentleness, of sweet piety and social geniality, of severe obedience to God and self-sacrificing love of men, of inflexible justice and of enduring mercy, of positive freedom from sin, and of daring and spontaneous sympathy with sinners—that He *is now;* that somewhere in God's world, in our world—He still lives and acts—is, if men would only think of it, the most stupendous of all facts. Even the heart that is not filled and fired with like precious faith with ours cannot fail to be exalted by such an idea! Surely a man like John Stuart Mill, regarding the life of Jesus as exhibiting one unsurpassed and unequalled character, cannot clothe it with eternal changelessness and class it amongst the operative forces of to-day without being stirred to "admiration and hope and love"!

Christ being what He was and is, is *the true explanation of man.* The Incarnation is the indefectible historical witness that the unit of power in life is—as Phillips Brooks somewhere says—"not man and is not God, but God and man"; God in man, man in God, indwelling and indwelt; not meeting casually and temporarily, but redeemingly and abidingly; God investing man like an atmosphere, and man opening the lungs of his soul to His life-giving and inspiring influence. The Incarnation is not an accident, it is a part of the world-plan of God, as Schelling and others have taught.* It is the actualizing of the eternal purpose. God was in Christ—in the Babe, the Youth, the Carpenter, the Teacher, the Saviour—reconciling the whole

* Cf. Bishop Westcott's Essay on the Incarnation in his commentary on the Epistles of John, entitled "The Gospel of Creation."

world of human life to Himself, that men might never think of the fight with sin as exclusively their own, but His as well as theirs, and know that when they give free play to the powers of the Spirit of God they attain their best. Jacobi says, "God must be born in man himself if He is to be a living God, and not a mere idol." Jesus says it is so. Man *may* and *must* be born from above, and the incarnation is the positive beginning of the new life.

Not only are exceeding great and precious promises given us in Him that we may become partakers of the divine reason and the divine heart, of the divine righteousness and the divine power, of the divine peace and the divine joy; but Christ in His access to our life is Emmanuel, "God with us," and mediates God to us, and therefore transforms and transfigures both our life and our world.

> "I but open my eyes—and perfection, no more and no less,
> In the kind I imagined full fronts me, and God is seen God
> In the star, in the storm, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod." *

Hence the way out of the long dispute between Calvinism and Arminianism is not by division and debate, but by the recognition of the higher truths of the Incarnation; as it assures us that God enters our humanity itself—not into a mere fragment of our flesh; not into a man here and another there, but into the whole of our nature and our humanity, and is part of it for evermore, as the Sun is part of this planet, and inseparable from it; working to deliver it from sin and death, and to renew it in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that created it.†

* Browning's "Saul."

† Exception has been taken to this statement of Paul's doctrine of the *immanence* of Christ in humanity. But compare Colossians, i. 9—23, for an all-sufficient vindication.

But will the cross of Christ retain its central place in the Coming Theology? Unquestionably, and with increased guarantees of security and power. "We preach Christ crucified, the wisdom of God and the power of God." But is not this a Pauline addition consequent upon his treating metaphors as truths and figures as facts? In no sense. The cross is the essence of Christ's life. Redemption is an integral part of Christ's work and teaching. Christ is the sacrifice for sins; offered, not in appeasement of an implacable wrath towards men—that idea is a Pagan stain on His vicarious life and death—but God *gives* Him for us men, and so the "Atonement" has it source in the very heart and character of the Father. It is God manifesting Himself within the limits of our sinful lives as self-sacrificing love, so that He may make an end of sin and bring in an everlasting righteousness. To give Himself in the gift of His Son, to life and death for others, is the divinest thing God can do; and so the cross is the revelation of God in His truest and inmost life, in His intense hatred of evil and love of good, in His delight in mercy and readiness to forgive, and in His willingness to go to that awful goal of Calvary to get rid of sin and inspire and enthrone holiness.

But suffering to save others is a faultless conception of Christian duty. Man is at his best on the cross, and life is seen in its ideal nobleness and virtue in that "when He was reviled He reviled not again," and that "He made Himself of no reputation and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." In the language of Luther, "when he suffers, dies, and descends to hell, that He may overcome all things, since sin, death, and hell cannot swallow Him up they

must needs be swallowed up by Him in stupendous conflict. For His righteousness rises above all the sins of men, His life is more powerful than all death, His salvation is more unconquerable than all hell."

> "What marvel, when the Lord our God Most High,
> Clothed in our flesh, was lifted up to die,
> If then His Godhead to His manhood gave
> Merit and force a thousand worlds to save."

Through Christ man has realized himself in some degree as an individual; it remains for him to accomplish the *greater task of realizing himself as humanity.* The potency of the human unit forgiven, saved, washed, and sanctified by Christ, is demonstrated with unanswerable fulness; and the capacity of the simple Christian Church of the New Testament, with its freedom from popes and lord bishops and hierarchical assumptions, to train in self-sacrificing service, to fashion character after the pattern man, is illustrated on many a page of the annals of the past. But the Ideal Church is the Ideal of Society. The training in social duties within the genial atmosphere of the Christian community is intended to prepare for the realization of the brotherhood of man in the more stormy and tumultuous life of the world. Sociology is a branch of New Testament ecclesiology. The life of self-sacrificing love in Christ is the life for the Church and for the whole world. He must make all social and political things new.

Nor is this all. Christ is the Eternal Reason, the Logos. He was: He is: He is to come. He is the heir of the ages, and He is their goal. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. Christianity is not an episode in religion—it is its law and plan.

It is the explanation of history. It reveals the purpose of God to establish a divine and heavenly rule. It interprets the past, and is the key to the future. God is one, immanent in all things, whilst above all; and life is one, here and there, in the far off past, and in eternity, and notwithstanding baffled endeavour and frequent loss, and keen suffering and wearying toil, all things travel towards their predestined consummation in a harmonized universe blessedly subject to God.

"All cognition," says Herbert Spencer "is recognition." All knowledge of God is recognition of Jesus; of what He was to the primitive Christians, of what He wrought in their days, and has wrought since. Now Jesus shows that God is more than force, persistent and eternal; more than power, working for righteousness; that He is the Eternal Reason, planning and shaping all lives on the basis of reason, the Eternal Love caring for man, who is not right and needs redemption and renewal, the Eternal Spirit everywhere accessible as a Father, ruling in love, redeeming to rule; as the Son seeking and saving the lost by the sacrifice of Himself; and as the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth guiding men into all truth of thought and life and service.

To sum up briefly: The Coming Theology will have for its chief distinction the return to Christ, in history and in idea, in person and sway, as "all, and in all:" our primary means of surely knowing God, interpreting and defining Him. Whilst modestly recognizing the limits of human knowledge, it will strenuously assert His authority, and revive the Hebrew awe, insist on the elimination of all that is arbitrary and fitful in the conception of His rule; affirm the univer-

sality of reason, law, order, holiness, and maintain that His administration is from first to last redemptive, renewing, educational, and disciplinary, and that therefore man's chief end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him for ever. It will treat His elections as preparations for expansion and means of progress. It will regard the Bible as the revelation of His history, written in the literature of a people, and whilst full of His inspiration, and finally authoritative as to faith and duty, yet marked by the limitations incident to the conditions of its creation. It will simplify and unify the Churches, making them congregational in government, catholic in sympathy, federated in work, averse to sacerdotalism as anti-Christian, ashamed of all that is unjust, and therefore refusing the patronage and control of the State. It will not lose sight of the individual, but it will strongly assert the solid oneness of all nations and races; the brotherhood of all men. Politics will be religious. The "secular" will be banished by being spiritualized. Women and children will have their rights restored. Men will be taught to look upon the "necessities" of the world as a common stock in which they are partners, and the work of the world as their privilege. It will insist upon retribution here and there, in this state and the next, but it will rectify the defect of this state by proclaiming the hopes of a vision of the full manifestation of God in Christ for all those who have not had that highest human privilege here. It will, we may surely expect, be sweet in temper, kindly in tone, and courteous in debate, and teach, and practise as well as teach, that the greatest things in the world are justice and love.

We must not forget, then, the prodigious power of the true idea of God, of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Amongst ideas it is the most forcible instrument we can use. It carries life, life eternal. For this is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent. A bad idea of God makes a bad religion, a bad religion makes a bad people. A true idea cleanses the mind of error, exalts the ideals of living, and carries the soul to those heights of achievement, which redeem the individual from shame, and the race from despair.

But of all true ideas, none are so invincible and expansive as those embodied in a true and real personality. Persons lift ideas out of the realm of cold abstractions and force them in upon us glowing with the heat of their conviction, conquering by the strength of their reason, and persuasive by the sweetness of their love. You can never exhaust a personality, least of all the personality of Christ, and therefore a theology that is based on Him and His teaching must be living and progressive. It has all the powers of an endless life; and, like Tennyson's reward of virtue, "It is always going on and ever to be." No one confessed more freely and gladly than Paul that he was complete in Christ *now;* but, looking ahead, he says "*Then* shall I know even as I am known." We have to follow on to apprehend and apply to the changing needs of life the ideas of His revelation. We do not know more than the alphabet of our Gospel. It is full of unexhausted energies and undeveloped ideas, and of latent capabilities for all the moral needs of the coming century. Its best work is in the future; and its most gladdening promises of gifts for men are to be fulfilled in its salvation, not of

a cluster of men here and there, but of nations—yea, of humanity. The wisdom of God in the Crucified Man will bring every thought into captivity to him, and cast it into the moulds of His divine ideas. His ethics, with their self-less basis, like His altruistic spirit, will cast out the pessimism of man and bring in the gracious rule of God.

But it is of the utmost importance that we get a true theology, and we must remember that we can only get that by a true and right way. No tongue can express the damage done to souls by the use of false methods of theological inquiry. Sir John Mandeville tells us in his travels that in his time, in a certain country, there was to be found the hand of a saint, which was miraculously endowed with the gift of discerning the truth and falsehood of all disputes. If the statements of the respective cases of the litigants were placed in this dead saint's hand, it would, after a short time, throw away the false brief, and hold up the true. That "dead hand" is sadly familiar: but with very different results. Many of us have felt its cold, clammy touch. Its icy sway extends far and near; over our laws, in our sciences, through our Churches, and in our homes. In politics it has played fearful havoc, and often in the name of the balance of power "let slip the dogs of war." It has seized the land and prevented its use by the people, and forced them into hovels that have dwarfed their life and sapped their joys. It still impoverishes national education in the name of religion, and diverts charities from the persons they were meant for in the name of the Church. But as "the corruption of the best is the worst," so the mischief wrought in theology is the most dire and deadly. It has set the

letter above the spirit, the form above the substance; the views and opinions of men about the Scripture higher than the Scripture itself; thought more of the Catechism than the words of Jesus; and led companies of sincere souls round and round the temple of truth, singing of its beauty, without ever taking them inside to worship and admire.

In many a controversy Luther substituted the living spirit for the saint's "dead hand;" but my friend, the late Dr. Macleod, of Birkenhead, very suggestively says: "It is a striking illustration of the imperfection of human thought, and of the slow advance of the human mind in the knowledge of God, that the immediate successors of the men who unveiled the face of the Saviour were the means of casting another shadow as dark on that face. It was through the illustrious Calvin, one of the profoundest of theologians, and than whom no one has more fully expounded the grace of God to His people, that the awful dogma of Reprobation came into the creed of the Reformed Church." For centuries that same "dead hand" lay across the words, "God so loved the world," and prevented men from realizing the fulness and breadth of the redeeming love of God to man. In fact, it has wrought so disastrously that educated young men and women have come to regard theology as a subject that is "managed," not studied; and to think that the theologian is astute, but not honest; clever, but not candid; subtle, but not straight; a dabster at schemes and scheming, but averse to admitting facts or recognizing the limitations of his knowledge.

In theology, then, as elsewhere, we must "buy the truth and sell it not," and be willing to pay the highest

price, in college and Church, in order to get it. Get rid of the delusion that it is of secondary importance. Give it its right place in your provision for the Church of the Future. It will fire your imaginations, determine your influence on politics, stimulate your evangelic activity, and ennoble your character. Stand, therefore, fast by your inherited independence. Cherish the freedom for which your fathers fought. Neither make nor suffer the use of fetters on thought and speech. Better for a man here and there to blunder than that truth should not have free course and be glorified. Edmund Burke said, "When the conditions of national life have greatly changed, the beaten path is the very reverse of the safe road." Luther did not repeat Chrysostom; the Apostles were not echoes of one another. Each man told the truth he received from Christ Himself, and that is what we need now. Men who have the courage to say what God tells them, at all risks and at all costs, will always be wanted. Philistia will sneer at them. Respectability will gather up its skirts and pass them by. Men who never did a rash act, and could not if they would, will rise and utter eloquently some grandiose inanity, and win applause. But the apostles of truth will be called for by a voice that is irresistible, and all clean-minded, honest souls will rejoice in their frank and clear speech, testing it by the Scriptures, whether it be true or false.

The one thing needful, I repeat, is to go back to the Christ of "the Great Forty Years," to "the faith" then "delivered to the saints." This is the issue of the hour. All our questions run into this; all our problems of sacerdotalism and socialism, of "inspiration" and "atonement," group themselves around Him. Cæsar

said, that at Alesia, Pharsalia, and Thapsus he fought for victory; at Munda he fought for life. We are at Munda now. We are fighting for life, in our colleges, and in our Churches, in school and in State, fighting against spiritual wickedness in high places; against intemperance and impurity, against sacerdotalism and selfishness; and we shall live and win, because He who fights for us and with us is the Lord Jesus Himself, the Captain of our Salvation, the Source and Basis, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

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